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The Generalate Team / 75-1, November 1975

Building the Christian Community

Our priority for action

All our attention should be centered on the building of Christian communities which are rooted in the cultural milieu... GA/12

An old confrère "thinks out loud"

"With our older men and the few young ones, we are at an impasse; we have no future... We have been here for more than a hundred years and we have not succeeded in forming a Local Church. What we need now is a sharp break, to provoke a conscious awareness. I wish I were mistaken, but that is the conclusion I have come to."

Another wants us to share his joy

"I consider this the best period in all my missionary life. Now I am very happy and I better understand my work as a priest." (Father Martinho, Brazil, 60 years old).

What is Father Martinho's secret? All alone, with a large area in Brazil to care for, he asked the Principal Superior for more Fathers to help him. But there were none. The Principal Superior encouraged him to appeal to the laity for help; to have confidence in them. Living and dynamic communities began to spring up. Now he has no need of those extra priests. Father Martinho discovered the "miracle" of small communities. In the words of his Principal Superior, "these communities are truly a rejuvenation for the Spiritans."

From all over, Bishops are calling for the creation of Christian communities inspired by the renewal of the Second Vatican Council. To quote one example:

"The work of founding, rooting, and animating communities which group Christians and catechumens together at the village or area level must be promoted and considered as a vital priority for the Church in the Congo." (Episcopal Conference of the Congo, 1973).

A new opportunity for our missionary activity? How do we react to it?

Dear Confrères,

We are happy to present this first edition of I/D.

We propose, in each issue, to discuss an idea or a question of particular interest to us, which seems at the same time to have particular relevance as well to the Congregation and its mission. In seeking to fulfill the mandate given to us in the Guidelines for Animation (146-148) we shall draw upon the lived experiences of confrères, the reports of experiments, investigations and discoveries and of disappointments too.

It is our sincere hope that I/D will grow into a powerful instrument of animation and fraternal union for every member of the Congregation. We invite your comments and suggestions.

The Generalate Team

An interview with father Martin van Roy CSSp

"Towards a Living Christian Community in Bantu Country"

Note: Father Martin van Roy works in the Popular Republic of the Congo. For several years he has been working at the formation of Christian communities, deeply rooted in the human environment. We give here only a suggestion of Father's rich experience. If you would like to know more about it, we can supply copies either of the interview itself in its entirety or of two mimeographed articles.

Q. Father Martin, what was the starting-point for your experiment?

A. I started from the Bantu milieu itself, from the Bantu man's communitarian view of life. The Bantu exists for his clan. Left alone and in isolation, he withers away; he is like an outcast. He develops and flourishes above all, by the very fact of being with his brethren; his life consists in his close relationships with them. Community spirit and the sense of belonging are the creative forces at the heart of the community.

Q. Starting from the Bantu milieu, how do you see the Church developing?

A. First of all, let's make one point clear: we believe simply that the Christian community is the Church, the Body of Christ. The theological considerations we leave to the specialists! We stress the Church as the People of God, the race of sons of God which has its ancestor and progenitor the living Jesus Christ, who died and rose again.

We stress the solidarity and the living relationship which the community must have with Christ, the Apostles, their successors, and among the members themselves.

We stress solidarity in the apostolate. Formerly, the people at the grass roots were allowed to be too passive. Now we insist on the fact that the first of the sacraments is the Church itself; i.e. the Christian community. To be passive is the "original sin" for a member of the Christian community.

We stress collective salvation, insisting upon the liberating power of the Message, a collective and group liberation.

Q. How did you succeed in setting up these communities?

A. First of all, there must be an effort at sensitizing at the grass roots, persuading people that the Church is their business; that they have a responsibility for it.

Once this is understood, there is the task of choosing leaders. This selection must also be everybody's business. We prefer to have people who are representative and recognized as such, who are just and open-minded, who have a real influence among the people.

We devote ourselves to the formation of these leaders. This we consider to be the specific task of the missionary.

Once a week there are meetings which contribute a great deal to the development of the community. It is at these meetings that we try to highlight, or, should we say, to live, what we consider to be the *essential characteristics* of a true community:

 to be a community of faith, of prayer, by the means of the Word of God

- to be a community devoted to the apostolate
- · to be a community marked by charity
- to be a community engaged in development.

We also attach great importance to visits from one community to another, or to meetings of several communities, or even all of them at once.

Q. What form does your organization take?

A. After about five years, we developed a structure within which each parish or mission is divided into several sections; each section made up of eight to ten communities.

Each Christian community has its designated leaders who look after the services the community needs. We lay great stress on the need for each community to be missionary in nature.

Each section is a group of eight to ten communities. The person at the head of it makes it his full-time job. He goes around visiting the communities, settling business matters, trains those in charge for the various services required of them. He is assisted by a Council composed of community leaders.

The heads of all the sections together form the Parish Council. The Council has a President, who is not necessarily the missionary. The missionary team does take part in the Council.

Q. What is the missionary's role?

A. More and more the specific role of every missionary will be that of founding and animating these communities.

An Appeal: We would be interested to hear of your efforts along these lines — experiments, writings or articles about Christian communities; let us know of any reading which has helped you, so that we can pass it on. We can supply you with several articles on Christian communities. If you specify what particular aspect interests you, we shall reply as best we can.

A Final Word: Father Paul Coulon, CSSp. has prepared an audio-visual programme about Christian communities for use in missionary animation. Write to us for more information.

Some personal reflections

A Renewal

It is a reality! In ten years, the face of the Church in Brazil has been transformed by basic communities. After a few isolated experiments, basic communities were launched as the most important means for renewal of the parishes and of the life of the Church.

In 1965 the Episcopal Conference of Brazil placed the emphasis upon basic communities in its pastoral plan for the years 1965-1970. Today there are more than 40,000 basic communities in Brazil and new ones are springing up every day. In 1968 this pastoral plan, launched in Brazil, was taken up by the Episcopal

Conferences of Latin America (CELAM) at Medellin. There are now basic communities in every country on this continent.

In 1974 the Bishops reaffirmed basic communities as a pastoral priority. Several dioceses and prelatures including the Spiritans in Tefé and in Amazonia, have concentrated their entire pastoral efforts in this direction.

Slow Development

There are regions where basic communities are slow in developing. Strange as it may seem, one of the handicaps in these areas is the too-great number of priests. Besides this, there is often that type of pastoral activity which is too sacrament — centered, too clerical and too traditional.

Affinities with Other Continents

I used to think that these basis communities in South America were vastly different from Christian communities in Africa or other continents. In many ways they are different. However on reading various publications and listening to missionaries passing through the Generalate, I get the impression that it is the same movement and the same effort, above all, it is the same Spirit who is bringing the Church to birth everywhere among the People of God.

A Wish

Speaking as one who has heard of the development of small communities in Africa, and who has seen the truly extraordinary growth of basic communities in Brazil, I can only wish that all Spiritan missionaries could be part of this renewal in the Church. I feel that it is in small communities that we can find a "second spring" in our missionary efforts.

Adrian van Sonsbeek CSSp.

Note: For those who would like to know more about basic communities in Brazil, we have some articles at our disposition and we can furnish a bibliography.

Another testimony

(Note: For good reasons we shall let this Spiritan team remain anonymous. Faced with an impasse in its efforts at evangelization, it revised its entire missionary approach and has slowly begun to succeed in forming Christian communities. We cite this effort both to shed light on the program and to express our solidarity with them, and to urge many to pray for them and for all who are engaged in new and difficult apostolates.)

An Impasse

What do we mean by an impasse? Imagine 700 kilometres of river; six missions and several

small villages in the interior. The missions are slowly dying. The Sunday congregations are all old people and children. The young and the active stay away. Discouragement among the missionaries grows apace; many think of leaving.

That "Certain Something"

Still, there is a "certain something" in the missionary which will not let him resign himself to an impasse; something which fires his ingenuity. That "certain something" was part of this team.

Our Plan

Here then is our plan, worked out with the Bishop. Since, a sharp break with the present – practice is necessary to awaken the community. We will begin with the formation of a team of three or four, whose object will not be to run from one community to another to offer mass or to directly animate, but rather to form leaders, people in charge, and to train catechists. The team plans to spend one to three weeks in each center. Since these centers have no resident priests, the people will have to take things into their own hands or else die as a community. We will be there to form, to encourage, and to gather around the Eucharistic Table, those who are willing.

It will be a mobile team with meetings about three times a year in each center. When there are four of us we will be able to organize two sessions in the same area, one in the centre itself, the other in the back country, the bush.

The Sessions

In each session, we will work on several levels:

- The formation of leaders in Gospel and community living.
- Information and exchange of ideas with the whole community.
- Liturgical gatherings with the whole community. Since these celebrations will be prepared and animated by the community leaders, they will be necessarily limited in number.
- Work with the young people and the formation of literary and Gospel study groups wherever possible.

Our Purpose

We propose to lay the foundations for a selfoperating organization deeply animated by the Word of God.

A Team

I believe we have the opportunity to form a closely-knit team, complementary in its membership. Preparation and evaluation will be done regularly and will present no problem. We are determined too, to maintain a deep prayer life and a sharing of faith.

We are Happy

The work is hard, but we are happy to be involved in it. That this is the method of the future, we are more and more convinced. We are aware of the fact that had the experiment been tried under less favourable geographic and human circumstances than ours, the results might have been more conclusive. We realize that, but we would rather work here, in this spirit, than work with older methods anywhere else.

A Proposition

Almost everywhere we hear of pilot teams organized or in the process of formation. Several have expressed the wish that they too could start moving in these directions. We know, in good part from experience, how difficult and demanding this can be. Would it not be a good thing to put these teams in contact with one another? In that way they could give mutual support, supply information to one another, create bonds of solidarity; in short, help one another. We would be pleased to serve as the "introduction-service" and "exchange desk."

Our Comments

Perhaps your reply will be: "Christian communities are 'today's fad,' or, 'but we have always founded Christian communities,' or again 'you're going to break up everything into little groups; it will lead to a break-up of the unity of the Church.'"

Far from being the "fad of the day," the Christian community is essential if we wish to belong to Christ; this has been understood from the very first years of Christianity: "The whole group of believers were of one heart

and one soul" (cf. the two descriptions of the primitive community in Acts 2:42-46 and 4:32-34).

It is striking to note too the *diversity* of the first communities: in Jerusalem, in Corinth or in Colossae. The meeting of the Gospel and the different cultural milieus resulted in quite different communities. It will always be so.

The phenomenon of Christian communities, "the sign and communication of the Spirit today," is the result of the renewed ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. It is nothing else but the rejuvenation of a pyramidal Church, much more in conformity with the primitive Christian community as Scripture reveals it to us.

"The Second Vatican Council reemphasized the primitive concept of the Church as the People of God, the body of Christ. Its highest law, its style of life and its bond of unity and interpersonal love is true fraternal charity, lived and exercised in Christ. Its ministeries and services are the sustaining points, the channels of divine Goodness, spread out every-where among the People of God." (Bulletin of the District of Gabon, n° 23).

To us it seems important and necessary, shall we say indispensable, that we be open to this renewed ecclesiology if we wish to respond to what Guidelines for Animation sets up as a first priority. (GA/12) The same is true of all our mission priorities today.

Inspired by this renewal or simply by an analysis of the situation in which they find themselves, many of our missionaries are striving to establish genuine communities which will be able to assume responsibility and be missionary in spirit. These communities are something quite different from a large parish or mission which so often favors anonymity and lack of personal responsibility and turns Christians into "consumers".

We encourage such missionaries.

As a first step toward developing these vital Christian communities, we encourage the formation, of missionary teams which attach great importance to a life of sharing at every level; teams whose pastoral approach will be based on mobility, rather than on being tied to a permanent presence which hinders the emergence of communities; teams devoted above all to the formation of the laity, particularly leaders. We are convinced that Christian communities offer a whole new scope for our missionary activity.

The Generalate Team

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SR./195 CLIVO DICINNA/00136 ROME HTALY

The Generalate Team / 75-2, December 1975

The Formation of a Committed and Responsible Laity

Our Priority for Action

All our attention should be centered... on the growth of a responsible and fully committed laity. G/A 12

As we listen to the local churches, from the continents to the islands, everywhere the message is the same.

"We must strive in the spirit of Vatican II to reorganize our pastoral plans to give priority to the apostolate of the laity so that the Church may recover her true image as the People of God." (Mgr. Qualli, Guadeloupe: Pastoral Project).

"As we look to the future of the Church, we are well aware of the fact that all our projects will be realized only to the extent in which the whole Christian community participates in the life and in the mission of Christ." (AMECEA: Bishops of East Africa; Nairobi, 1973).

"The laity must be brought more directly into the Church's pastoral work, with more authority in parish structures. This is particularly true of catechists." (Symposium of the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar, Rome; September, 1975).

"And to some his gift was that they should be apostles; to some, prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ." (Eph 4, 11-12).

Missionary Echoes

"But this is exactly what we are doing.
 For a long time now we have been working on the formation of the laity. What else is new?"

- "For myself, I am convinced of the necessity of this formation. The question is 'how'? Have you any documents?"
- "I feel that there is still a chance for us. Never before have we had at our disposal so many possibilities for contributing to the development of the local Churches as we have today."
- "I am becoming aware that the question of the formation of the laity and of new ministries is, above all, a question of ecclesiology. Of which Church are we speaking?"

Many other questions arise, which, in fact, bear witness to an almost universal interest in the formation of a committed and responsible laity.

How deeply are we committed to this missionary priority? Someone observed recently that about 60% of us, and I am being kind, are not involved at all in this missionary priority. — True or false?

Dear Confreres,

I/D, in presenting subjects for consideration, hopes to be only the first step in what could be a far-reaching service of exchange and mutual assistance.

To those who wish to go deeper into the questions proposed, we suggest a request addressed to us, specifying what information or documentation you desire.

This will place demands on us we know, but all of us can benefit from sound mutual "brain-picking."

Besides, our recent inquiry into "Spiritan specialists" opened up to us our great potential for mutual assistance.

The Generalate Team

Many and diverse efforts

As we read over the annual reports for 1975, and recall our various visitations, it makes us happy indeed to see how many are deeply concerned about this priority of lay formation. There is a great variety, it is true, in our efforts and our initiatives, and we wish we could mention them all, not only to give recognition to the work, but also to share the ideas. We must be content though to mention only a few.

- Martinique. "I saw Father Ruscher travelling all over the islands giving bible courses and at Lorrain I met the team of Fathers Le Quéré and Prou and Brother Rolland who concentrate their efforts on the formation of formation personnel."
- Brazil. "During nine missionary years here, many times I saw the transforming influence of the Holy Spirit, and perhaps never more so than in the Cursillos de Cristiandad. A cursillo lasts a mere seventy-two hours, but its effects are vivifying and far-reaching, not only for the individual man or woman who makes it but also for the families, social circles and parish communities to which they belong." (Father Enda Watters).
- Cameroun. "In line with the pastoral priorities in the diocese of Doume, the apostolic efforts of the past few years, have been principally oriented to the Pastoral Council... From the pastoral point of view, this council seems to be a truly responsible committee; a forum of expression and a source of practical formation for the laity." (Father W. de Jong).
- Kenya. "We emphasize in this context of the formation of the laity the importance of the aggiornamento. In the Pastoral Institute of East Africa, Brian Hearne is involved in the training and updating of priests and sisters. His retreats, seminars, and writings in AFER and sharing have brought the teaching of Vatican II down to earth in East Africa." (Father C. Burke).
- Angola. Bishop Nascimento, of Malanje, orients his whole pastoral project toward the formation of the laity, and hopes for missionaries who are capable of working and functioning in this area. He proposes moreover, to group priests into mobile teams for forming catechists and community leaders.

A Courageous Beginning in Guyana

In French Guyana, that dreaded place, there exists a small tribe of Spiritans, little known

perhaps, but with much to tell us.

On the bank of the great Maroni River, where once stood the well-known Devils' Island prison, Fathers Lutz, Boyer, Weber and Mahot, a Spiritan team, are in charge of St. Lawrence Parish and minister besides to the many small dommunities of Indians and Blacks, scattered through the forests for one hundred kilometers along the shore of the Maroni.

For the team the great task is the formation of responsible lay people. To this end, Father Eugene Weber has founded a center for the formation of catechists, to which candidates from the different communities come to follow an eight months' course. This year

there are ten participants.

In spite of difficulties on every side, especially problems of finance, Father Weber, with the support of the team and the collaboration of a Franciscan sister, quietly pushes forward the efforts to form responsible lay people, who can become witnesses to the Gospel in their communities and movers for human development, both social and economic.

Is this all so extraordinary, you may ask? "No, but it does make us happy to see such devotion to the poor and neglected. We can well be amazed at Christian communities like the one at Apatou; and astounded at men who go back to the original Greek of the Gospel to be able to better translate it into the language of their people on the bank of the Maroni. To the team at St. Lawrence we say Good Luck and God Bless!"

Testimony from Kwara, Nigeria

"Some of us are devoting ourselves almost extensively to the formation of catechists and lay leaders, in collaboration with all the confreres engaged in the parish ministry.

"To this end, there is in Lagos, a National Institute for Moral and Religious Education whose aim is to form religious teachers for

our secondary schools.

"Many of our teachers (four of them Deacon-candidates) have already profited from the course there. Some have become full time leaders of pastoral activity in definite areas under the guidance of the father-in-charge. The others, besides seeing to the teaching of religion in the schools and the leadership of student movements, as specialists, are able to regularly visit the out-stations. Many of them regret, that in addition to preaching the Word, they are still not permitted to be ministers of the Eucharist." (Father R. St. Louis).

Formation of a Community Animation Team

Note: Among the many difficulties of lay formation, lack of time and know-how are the most frequently encountered. Solutions vary as situations are different. Here, we have, a happy solution to a problem in the rural areas of the diocese of Pointe-Noire, Popular Republic of Congo. There, a mobile team, comprised of Father Henry Legrand, and Sister Theresa Madec reports:

"For many years we have travelled the length and breadth of this vast diocese, going from mission to mission in an effort to assist fathers and sisters in forming lay community leaders.

"We organize three-day sessions, by mission or areas, and all, sisters, fathers and leaders, participate in their preparation.

"The session lay stress above all, on the commitment of the leaders to their communities. We are trying to 'form formers'. Here are some of the formation themes we have arrived at together:

- The Church according to Vatican II. Why the changes?
- The special work of a community;
- The ministries in a community;
- Community meetings, particularly the Sunday assembly without a priest;
- Signs of a living community, etc...

"In the evening, as night falls, the whole village gets together for a meeting. We show slides of Gospel themes and then on some subject of human development like sanitation or pest control.

"All is not perfect, far from it. Basically we are amateurs without special preparation. But we are already able to see some positive signs:

- Chapels are rising from the ground, built by the villagers themselves;
- More regular and more lively Sunday celebrations;
- The development among Christians of the realization, in conscience, that they are the Church and of their consequent responsibilities:
- Simpler and more open relationships with the fathers and the sisters;
- Some of the leaders themselves are already conducting sessions.

"Among the leaders there are some who have shown themselves capable of going much further. We are sensing the need to open a center where a more concentrated formation can take place. How far can we go?"

Parishes to the Laity

In July 1973, the Eighth Theological Week at Kinshasa studied the question of the responsibility of lay people in the Church; in September, Cardinal Malula announced a project which he submitted to his Priests' Council for approval. In essence, this is what he proposed:

- To entrust some parishes completely to certain lay leaders who had completed the three-year formation course. They would thus have a real opportunity to prove their competence.
- The project not only referred to out-stations of which lay people might take charge, but also relatively small parishes where there were priests actually working.
- Priests in charge of these parishes would gracefully retire from them. It was thought necessary that the lay leaders be on their own, so as not to be embarassed in the exercise of their new function by the presence of their former pastor.
- Priests from neighboring parishes would see to the uniquely sacerdotal ministries: the celebration of the Eucharist, penance etc.; above all they would provide for the spiritual animation of those laymen responsible for community worship.
- The lay leaders would attend all meetings for Deacons.
- The lay leaders would keep their present jobs.

The project has become a reality. In March 1975, the first lay-man was given charge of a parish by Cardinal Malula. Meanwhile, the formation center is preparing others to undertake this responsibility.

Referring to the project, Cardinal Malula pointed out that in placing laymen in charge of parishes, we cannot forget the urgent need for other lay ministries in all the parishes. The Theological Week, in its resolutions conclusions, had proposed a broad spectrum of ministries: the ministry of the Word; the ministry of the sick; regional and national development services; works of charity and social service; youth work, catechetical work with children and adolescents; on-going formation of adults; family services; presiding over Sunday prayer and liturgical preparation and certain sacramental celebrations; parish and diocesan secretariate work; the ministry of "The particular sacramentals and blessings. way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose." (1 Cor. 12,7).

Our Comments

A New Opportunity

How disappointing it was to have to leave active missionary work at this so-wonderful time, when such great possibilities exist to contribute to the development of the local Churches! What a time to be sent to Rome, to Monte Mario, to the General Council; to have to give up our cherished missionary projects.

However, there is a consolation in the thought that our past experiences, enriched by our visits and our meetings permit us to bear an even stronger witness to this prime missionary priority — the formation of an involved and responsible laity and the development of lay ministries.

"Now is the favorable time ... "

By a happy coincidence, the leaders of the local Churches are insisting on the same priorities as our G/A. All of them, and we too, see the great possibility and the excellent opportunity to promote the development of the local Churches to the stature of adult self-sufficiency.

Formerly, in another concept of the Church, in which the clergy monopolized the ministries, the missionary found himself more and more involved in the upkeep and the functioning of the communities he had founded. The emergence of a local Church, with its own ministers, remained a far-distant prospect, in spite of all the efforts to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Now is the favorable time. Today, in a concept of the Church, inspired by Vatican II, the concept of a ministerial People of God, we are able to wake Christians up and form them for the wide range of ministries and services which a community needs, all the while pursuing our efforts to promote religious and priestly vocations.

Facing Facts

For our part, we accept the words by which Father Jean Eon, Principal Superior of Mauritius, characterized the general run of missionaries: "There is no lack of good will." One such missionary, already up in years, whom I met at a district- meeting, described many of us

when he remarked, "at least you can see that we are trying to do something." The testimonies we cite in this number of I/D, and there could be many others, are eloquent in themselves. However, our feelings of deep respect, to say the least, should not cloud our judgment. It seems that our missionary activity, for the most part, degenerated into a concern for the pastoral maintenance and the smooth functioning of the community. Because this is so, we have no time to devote to the formation of lay leaders. While criticism may disturb us, it often contains much truth!

It is not wrong to recognize these facts, on the contrary, it can be good for us. Could things have been otherwise? In recent years the changes in so many areas have been so rapid that we have had to undergo several successive conversions. But we have no excuse at all if today we do not work, each according to his possibilities, so as to be able to respond to these missionary priorities.

We note with great joy how many efforts are being mounted in the Provinces and Districts so that we might be able to respond to the challenge of lay formation and the development of ministries: updating courses, continuing-formation programs, regrouping of communities, mobile teams, formation centers etc. How true it is that we are called to continual conversion!

"For my part, it is the Word of God that has convinced me of our priorities; the study and meditation on several great Scripture texts: 1 Corinthians, 12; Ephesians 4, 10-13; Romans 12, 4-8; Peter 4, 10 among them. This was a necessary conversion to the theology of the Church as the People of God with all the baptized participating in her life and in the Mission of Christ as well. All are responsible for this mission, and for the diversity of services necessary for the building up of the Church, the Body of Christ. It was necessary too to be converted to living and working as part of a team, in community, to make possible and more valid the formation of leaders. It was necessary to be a traveller again, in many areas...

Let us help each other for the Service of the Gospel. "Each one, according to the blessing received, put yourselves in the service of each other, like good stewards of the many blessings of God."

The Generalate Team

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The Generalate Team / 76-1, January 1976

What Does Libermann Mean to Us?

Very little? "I think of him occasionally."

Very much? "I look forward to reading him much more."

Nothing? "Nothing at all at the moment."

"The Lived Experience"

Last November, we asked the Major Superiors to assist us in determining the place of Libermann in the Congregation today. "Now is Libermann 'lived' or 'not lived'", we asked, "in your Province or District?" The replies we quote above are but a sampling of the many we received. We are grateful, indeed, to all those who replied, and to those who are still replying. Particularly, do we appreciate the simplicity and frankness evident in the answers you gave; indeed, we have "put our cards on the table."

The two pages following reflect the "lived experience," from several of the reports received before December 15. It is well to remember that the passages cited, of necessity only briefly, often give a partial view of the circumscriptions from which they come.

The Ideal

To reconcile this ground-level "lived experience" with the high ideal proposed by the Chapter of 1974, lacks neither interest nor humor. One might say that even to attempt it is to spark off discussions; discussions, however, which can shed light on several questions which must be resolved if Libermann is to be comfortably at home with his own. Let us recall that ideal.

We should study Father Libermann, the basis of his thought and his apostolic vision, so as to derive inspiration from them. It is particularly important to interpret and adapt his teachings to the needs of our times. (G/A 49)

Furthermore, the Chapter asked:

- that the spiritual richness of Libermann's writings be made available to the various language groups. (G/A 36)
- that there be a number of specialists in Spiritan Studies. (G/A 50)
- that knowledge of Spiritan spirituality and tradition be widely diffused. (G/A 51)
- that formation programs provide for the study of Libermann and his writings. (G/A 53)
- that community meetings be organized to study and discuss Libermann and his writings. (G/A 53)
- that ongoing training should give pride of place to the spiritual heritage of the Congregation, especially of Libermann. (G/A, A 16)

One Reaction

"In all truth, we cannot see how the Chapter documents can become operative in the environment of our Province and its members. We have the impression that those who are searching for authentic religious missionary renewal are much more likely to turn to contemporary authors who know the problems, the needs, and the hopes of today's world."

What Some Authors Say

"The spirit of Father Libermann reaches its true greatness precisely in the fact that while going straight to the essential, it manages to grasp what is typically evangelical in the idea of mission and so it is valid in many different contexts." (Father Tillard, OP, Roads to Peace).

"As yet Father Libermann does not hold his rightful place in the history of spirituality which some have already predicted. Time will allot to him a unique place in the history of missionary thought because he was so far ahead of his time. (Father Rétif, SJ, Spiritual Poverty and Missions).

"When, with the perception of hind-sight, the religious history of the nineteenth century is written this impressive personality (Libermann) will find his exact place and his real importance. Living as he did in God's light, his ming was

so enlightened that he anticipated the most modern missionary events to such an extent, that he is being looked upon today as a prophetic saint indeed." (Father Blanchard, *The Venerable Libermann*).

Dear Confreres:

To wish to cling to the past, with its customs and its spirit, would be to make our efforts completely useless. Rather let us welcome the new order in simplicity and freedom and bring to it the spirit of the Gospel. So shall we sanctify the world... I'm taking too much of your time though, so I leave you to Jesus and Mary.

Francis Libermann, priest

Poland. Our confreres in Poland have great admiration for Father Libermann; some translations have been made by Fathers Retka, Obarski, Mientki and Forys. The report states: "For us in Poland, one of the principal obstacles to a better understanding of the spiritual doctrine of our Venerable Father is the language problem. We still need some good and complete translations of his writings and his letters... Libermann is known to us, above all, as being devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, for this, he is very dear to us, as is Father Maximilian Kolbe. His doctrine on nature and sometimes his language are repugnant to many as being too pessimistic. It would seem to be necessary, on this point particularly, to present this doctrine more attractively and, in contemporary language. His views on the action of the Holy Spirit in us, are well accepted however, especially by young people and religious." (Father Forys, for the Provincial, Father Kolasny).

Gabon. We thank Father Morel, the Principal Superior, and all the confreres of Gabon for their individual responses. Here are some of them: "Place? Zero! I do not read him at all; he is unattractive and out of date." "Libermann did one good thing – he founded the Spiritans and that's it." "His writings do not interest me." "I simply have no time for him." - On the positive side: "Libermann holds a great place in my life. I became a Spiritan because I admired his doctrine. It is still to him that I turn for my spiritual renewal." - "I admire him very much and I think I am a faithful follower of this doctrine. I still use the Spiritual Directory in giving retreats for sisters." discovered Libermann principally through my memories of my formation... Presently I am rereading in the 'Notes and Documents' the story of ins conversion, and of how he succeeded in placing himself in the hands of God because of his weakness. I plan to read him much more in the days ahead."

Bagamoyo. "Our findings about Libermann's popularity here in Bagamoyo are very modest indeed, but not completely negative." Very simply, Father de Boer, Principal Superior, points out signs that bear witness to that: "The Spiritans by Father Henry Koren, is found in some of the missions and there are many people who have read it..."

Holland. Carefully pointing out that a certain number of the confreres follow Libermann implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, the Dutch Provincial team still poses some important questions: "It must be said that any signs indicating a great desire to practise Libermann's spirituality explicitly, and as a community, or that we would welcome a renewal or a restoration in this area, are almost nil. In all truth, we cannot see how the Chapter documents can become operative in the environment of our Province and its members. We have the impression that those who are searching for authentic religious missionary renewal, are much more likely to turn to contemporary authors who know the problems, the needs, and the hopes of today's world... Are they no longer true Spiritans? Or can they console themselves by saying that perhaps in being open to the needs and to the urgings of today's world and today's Church, they are manifesting a truly Libermann attitude?

Central African Republic. We are very grateful to Father Robert, Principal Superior of Central Africa, and to the confreres there for their frank report. Father Robert, while convinced of Libermann's value, still raises some difficulties: "The study of Libermann discourages the confreres, not only because of his archaic language, but also because of some of his theology which the majority no longer accept - 'God is all, man is nothing', for instance. Others find the study of Libermann useless in these days of biblical rediscovery, when there is so much interest in a spirituality common to all congregations and to all Christians, rather than an individualistic, self-centered Today, more and more we see intercommunication between male and female religious of all congregations and between religious and lay people. There is a question underlying all of this, which we hardly dare to ask: A founder has played a role, in his own time, of founding and stamping his spirit on a Congregation, true, but is it necessary to return to his writings today, to look for inspiration which we are finding elsewhere, and which is bringing us

into closer contact with other congregations and with the laity?"

Auteuil. I have just been appointed religious Superior of Auteuil and I cannot answer this question... It seems to me that in the District of Auteuil we live more with Father Brottier whose hundreth birthday we will celebrate next year... Make us know and love Libermann better and try to show us his teachings for today..." (Father Balthasar).

Sierra Leone. In this District, Libermann seems to be well received. "The Spiritans in Sierra Leone, in general, show a great good will to know more about Father Libermann and his spirituality and to hear it applied to their situation. One member of the District, Father Myles Fay, will be attending the Libermann Studies meeting in Rome. He circularized the confreres and received many encouraging replies both orally and in writing. Two main requests recur: a) simple translations of Libermann's writings; b) contemporary applications to our mission."

Switzerland. Some things are being done here as Father Coudray, Provincial, notes: "It seems that in spite of one or two strong efforts, Libermann is hardly lived in our Province. This is partially explained by our very strong investment of personnel in the missions." "However", he points out, "young Spiritans, especially those who have had a contemporary novitiate, have a liking for Libermann."

Kongolo. From this District in Zaire, some reflections have come which help us to encompass the problem of Libermann: "I prefer to devote my time to the Gospel." — "Libermann was of his time and even ahead of his time; but if we place ourselves in his school today, we are one hundred years behind the times." — "There is a danger in studying Libermann with pre-conceived ideas, which all hope to find in him, and always do manage to find in him." Father Toon Hermans thus sums it up: "Libermann is our founder. Unconsciously we live in his spirit which still continues in the Congregation. All the years of our formation and of our common interest have created family ties which endure."

Portugal. The study Libermann in the houses of formation, February 2 celebrations, articles on Libermann spirituality in the review Cor Unum are indications of a certain interest in the founder. "Besides these though, our lives bear little relationship to Libermann explicitly. In a general way we try to be faithful to his charisma of devotion to the poorest and the most abandoned, and concretely, even to this day, the missionary works of the Province have

been established exclusively in Africa." (Father J. M. Gonçalves Araujo, Provincial).

The Antilles and Guyana. The question is simply how to make an up to date presentation of the teachings of Libermann. (Fathers Gauthier, Pedrono, Rey, Principal Superiors).

Cameroun. The District Council answered our inquiry through Father Michel, Principal Superior. "We live by Libermann by the fact that we are his collaborators, in a spirit of poverty and deprivation; we live Libermann in giving ourselves totally to the works confided to us, and in our total commitment to missionary works... Our lack of fidelity to Libermann is manifested, above all, by our lack of interest or participation in the present movement of renewal in the Spirit, since we are supposed to be specialists in this area, pioneers in this renewal because of our training and our spirituality."

Kilimanjaro. "The question you asked in your circular on the subject of Father Libermann can be answered fairly easily: There is almost no knowledge of Father Libermann in this area. I say 'almost' because I am not aware how successful the booklet about him Rafiki wa Africa has been... This does not apply however to our own training programs for African Spiritans. In the pre-Philosophy year and again in the Novitiate there is a course on Father Libermann... Since you said that negative findings would be useful too, I do not hesitate to send the above information." (Father Tunney, Principal Superior).

Belgium. After noting several signs which denote an interest in Libermann Father Maenan, Provincial, adds a conclusion which seems to shed full light on the "Libermann problem": "I get the impression that we do not very well comprehend how to actually live Libermann's doctrine today, or how to comprehend 'the importance and the role of Libermann today!' We find ourselves in a totally different set of circumstances, situations, life styles and pro-This does not mean that we would blems. be unhappy if someone helped us to situate him at the very heart of our world and its problems. In fact, we do feel a little lost, out of place, as it were, as we come face to face with the actual developments in theology, missiology and spirituality. I believe too, that our Founder has lost out in the process. Finally, we must add that faced with a 'proper spirituality' we feel the same reaction as we do with regards to the 'proper charism of the different missionary institutes.' Perhaps the Libermann experts can help us to rediscover our own identity. How welcome that would be to so many confreres!

Towards the Rediscovery of Libermann

When god "chose to reveal His Son to me so that I might preach the Good News of Him to the pagans," He quickly brought me to that life in the Spirit which Paul speaks of: "everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God." This interior journey though, was full of pitfalls and I was looking for someone, who, out of personal experience could help me find the way. was Father Liagre who led me to Father Libermann through his series of confrences, published in 1946, on the influence of the Holy Spirit and Libermann's life and in the formation he gave to his missionaries. Several essential passages from Libermann supported by a critical personal study of the people to whom he was writing, were most enlightening to me as I scraped away the form to reach the substance of his life.

Later on, trying to discover the secret of the connection between apostolic action and that "life hidden with Christ in God," I found it in some of the letters to missionaries and above all in the extraordinary Chapter of commentary on apostolic zeal.

In conversations with confreres about Libermann I frequently find the same interior journey in other forms. In speaking of this pilgrimage in the retreats I have given to members of the congregation, I have often been able to recognize that more and more are discovering or rediscovering their fundamental vocation and the mystique for missionary action in the life of Libermann.

I believe that we should begin with a few well-chosen texts, and present them with the indispensible demands of historic and literary criticism. In this way the essence of his message, always so new, could make of us, according to the ways of God, the artisans of a spiritual renewal at the very heart of the Church's mission.

Father Alphonse Gilbert

A Return to Libermann

Father Christy Burke, a "convert" to Libermann in the introduction to a paper on Libermann, lists the conditions which must be met, if an encounter with Libermann is to be possible. We reproduce the passage here, and offer the entire article to anyone desiring it.

"Many Spiritans today are anxious to know more about Libermann and to learn from him. This interest in the founder could be a new source of life and dynamism for those who are called to the missionary apostolate. In order that this interest may be as fruitful as possible it seems that the following conditions have to be fulfilled. First, Libermann must not be the 'terminus' of the interest and study. He is an important signpost that should point to Christ. The road to Christ should not be the same as the one followed over a century ago; if the signpost is of any use it must be on the road where we now find ourselves. Secondly, it would be futile, even dangerous for the Congregation, if a return to Libermann were undertaken for ideological reasons. would appear that nothing can be gained now by using Libermann to justify or condemn positions taken and methods followed. There must be an openess of mind and a liberty of spirit if polemic and head-bashing are to be avoided. Thirdly, the motive for a return to the life and teaching of Libermann should be to recover or develop the missionary vocation in the Congregation and to revitalize the missionary commitment of all members and all communities.

Our Comments

It is an excellent thing indeed to question ourselves about Libermann and to speak frankly on what he means to us!

The discussions though raise questions which demand solutions. Unless we find them, there is danger that Libermann will, more and more, be isolated in the nineteenth century with no impact whatever for us.

For example, we have the problem of Libermann's language; we object to his expressing himself in the context of a time that is long past; that he reflects a theology and a spirituality which no longer impress us. We begin asking ourselves if the inspiration of our life and of our missionary action must not be looked for elsewhere.

Following this track to its end brings us to the very same question that came up in the Chapter: "What is it that unites us?" Our mission? Our life? and, in the context of the actual evolution, we may further ask ourselves, "what mission; what life?"

Recently in a certain district the missionaries were questioning each other about the specific ends of their respective institutes, when suddenly they realized that their images so resembled each other, that at a certain point they merged.

How annoying it can be to lose your image; to find yourself reduced to a common denominator!

We believe that it is possible to develop a life which brings us together in the light of today's missionary demands. Father General suggested this in his Christmas letter and we hope to come back to it at a future date.

The Generalate Team

I/D 4

The Generalate Team / 76-2, February 1976

Our Commitments and Our Priorities

1 - The Signs

"In view of the special character of our Institute . . . it is necessary that:

- the Generalate, the Provinces and Districts draw up a list of apostolic priorities within our possibility to fulfill;
- we take a critical look at our present commitments in the light of these priorities;
- each Province and District then suggest to the Generalate, works which they think Spiritans might undertake." (G/A 13)

An important task and an urgent task, indeed! We cannot at the same time, keep the commitments we have made and respond also to the demands of the new "Mission," as presently understood. It is vital for a Congregation to be able to respond to the demands and needs of today's Mission, and to those that we foresee for tomorrow.

Our commitments raise another more fundamental question, that of our "missionary and Spiritan identity."

These questions are not new. However, we find today, not only among ourselves, but in other Congregations as well, the desire to emerge from a confused present situation, with its questions and its doubts. We want to launch out again, guided by the new light thrown on the apostolate by changes in the Church and in the world.

"Give us a star!"

"We don't want to be comfortable. We're prepared to live with trial and error. We're ready to become stateless persons. We're ready to go out again and again. Don't underrate us! But we need so much 'the rapture of an inspiration." The cycle which made expenence so

valuable is spent, so that starting with the problems and difficulties is not going to stimulate. The problems are new and formidable. A 'coldcoming' we'll have of it maybe, but without a star we will never set out." (Father Michael Cahill, a young missionary)

"We need an ideal"

"What seems to be missing is a vision for the future of the Congregation . . . Where are we going? And always, there is the underlying problem of the loss of our identity, in general, and of our Spiritan identity, in particular. We have rooted ourselves too deeply in our work . . . we no longer dare to change . . . to take risks . . . we need an ideal." (Spiritan Recollection, Morogoro)

With the decline of a missionary epoch that is ending, a new missionary epoch is coming to birth. Would it not be to our advantage to try to foresee it now, and to determine precisely what will eventuate?

Such an effort will certainly help us to better determine our Spiritan and missionary identity, and to focus more clearly on our actual and future commitments. (G/A 13)

We propose to treat these questions in the four following I/D's, which together will form a unit.

- I/D 4: to point out the signs of renewal in our experiences
- I/D 5: to describe the important developments of Mission
- I/D 6: to suggest orientations, commitments and projects for us
- I/D 7: to come to clearer conclusions about "Spiritan identity."

Thus, together, we hope to determine our course and our commitments. Everyone's contribution will be important!

The Generalate Team

What We Hear...

The best place to seek our new missionary directives is in that most interesting book, the book of daily life. It is in the Provinces and Districts, first and foremost, that the signs of the new "Mission" manifest themselves. There, we can hear, indeed, "what the Spirit is saying to the Churches."

From a District - Mauritius

The recent visitation of Mauritius by Father Timmermans and Father Gross was an enchanting experience for both of them. "We could easily have allowed ourselves to be seduced by the beauty of it all," they confessed, "an alive Church rich with promise, would move anyone to want to stay there."

"In this cosmopolitan country, there is an international Spiritan group. Irishmen, Englishmen, Frenchmen, one Canadian, three Mauritians and a native of Reunion, make up a group of 26, all united under 'the two Jeans,' Bishop Jean Margeot, the driving force and center of unity, and Father Jean Eon, the engaging Principal Superior. Everyone appreciates the presence of this small but truly international group of Spiritans.

"The vitality of the group, and that's an understatement, manifested itself from the very beginning of our meeting. Almost the first questions we heard were: 'Are we in a missionary situation here?' 'What is our missionary presence in Mauritius?' 'What of the future?' Interesting questions, indeed, which reveal the actual concerns of day to day living — a missionary project, in the strict sense of the word.

"It was an intensely interesting dialogue with all the confreres, with the bishop and with others, as we sought to discover the signs which would enable us to precisely determine our missionary presence within the local Church, responsible to the bishop, and conscious of the actual situation of the country. Some of the signs which emerged among others:

- A new initiative for the formation of religious and priestly vocations and for training community leaders.
- Research for a plan for the catechesis of the young and of students;
- The beginnings of district communities and of a district pastoral plan;
- Commitments to the "voiceless;"
- Development of a missionary animation center near Father Laval's tomb;
- Inter-island meetings of the Principal Superiors of the Indian Ocean, etc.

"In these living realities, one can see the plan of our priorities and missionary engagements. It is possible from these beginnings to further develop 'a missionary project,' in this multi-racial country which contains 500,000 Hindus alone.

"Naturally, the 'signs' in a District like Mauritius are proper to itself; but there are all the other districts too. To listen to each and to ponder the totality is to hear an inner voice, telling us definitely where we are bound."

From a Province - Spain

"The task of promotion and development in the Province of Spain is carried on mainly through the efforts of the missionary animation teams in Barcelona and Madrid.

"In order to develop missionary vocations, we work with young people in the education centers and university residences. In places like these it is possible to engage in dialogue with young people.

"At the moment, we are organizing meetings with young people in our own communities, and especially at the Novitiate in Castrillo de la Vega." (Father Machado, Provincial)

Young people from all over are coming to our communities to participate for a while, in the life of our young confreres, to share their community life and their missionary plans.

It is well to note that this points up an area in which the Provinces could actually involve themselves in a new missionary direction — missionary and community animation, definite signs of a missionary commitment and a missionary ideal.

From a New Foundation: the East African Spiritans

"Our East African foundation is already well under way. It incorporates Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia and has its own novitiate. From the beginning the intention has been to give the whole foundation a missionary dimension. The scholastics are being trained as missionaries and it is felt that young priests should from the beginning of their apostolic careers leave their own country so as to work abroad, e.g. in other parts of Africa. In this way it is hoped to develop the missionary image of the local Church in East Africa." (Father W. Gandy)

How the times and situations change! A most impressive sign, indeed, is the fostering of missionary vocations in the local Church, in the

different continents, in diverse cultures. "small conversion" here or there, could be still another opportunity for the "Mission" and for the Congregations themselves.

From a Young Confrere in the Middle East

Father Istifan Stirnemann, of the District of Mauritania, is presently living in Syria for the purpose of learning not only the Arab language but the Arab mentality as well. The reflections he offers correspond to some extent with our own preoccupations. Basically these are the questions which must concern us all.

"I have always admired Libermann and his tremendous missionary enthusiasm: to bring the Good News, in the spirit of Saint Paul, to all men, to every social class, to the most spiritually and materially deprived, and above all, to the most abandoned, forsaken apparently

by the Church herself.

"Unless we maintain this same enthusiasm, how can we call ourselves Spiritans? However, I fear that our last two Chapters have a bit too quickly buried the notion of 'first evangelisation' which constitutes our specific mission as Spiritans, as sons of Libermann.

"There are still millions of men and women. a large part of the human race, who have never heard of Christ; whole countries without any missionary presence whatever. With a little more imagination, I think we can reach these

people.

"But even for those who should be far more advanced and for the Church, in general, the notion of the mission is being narrowed more and more to the concept of 'assisting the

young Churches.'

"I am sure that if Libermann were alive today. he would be throwing us into new missions, into remote places among the Kirdis of Cameroun, the Haoussas, the Tambacounda of Saint Louis in Senegal; into places like Mauritania, Lybia, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan.

"Only recently the Congregation began to dialogue with Islam - an area in which the

Spirit seems to be moving mightily.

"On the subject of large non-christian religions, Pope Paul VI recently reminded us: 'Neither respect, nor esteem for these religions, nor the complexity of the questions they raise should prevent the Church from announcing to them the Good News of Jesus Christ.'

"Is not this announcement of the Good News, both in attitude and in dialogue, in line with the truest Spiritan vocation? We could use many many missionaries to establish in many places this dialogue with Islam . . . Unfortunate

ly, the mission in Moslem countries is very difficult. I have learned from difficult experience how long and difficult the study of Arabic can be and what effort and sweat it demands.

"How often the question occurs to me - and I pass it on to you: 'Suppose we had some Arab Spiritans?' Female religious of all sorts and kinds have established themselves in the Middle-East. They have fostered many vocations and have even sent them elsewhere as missionaries - to Mauritania for instance. Will the boys be less generous than the girls?

"During my first days in Damascus, I was

struck by many things:

 the vitality of the young christians in Damascus and their generosity in giving of themselves.

- the lack of missionary spirit in the local communities. We feel once again the absence of a permanent mission.
- the fact of hearing from high religious authorities, reflections such as these: 'You, religious, missionaries above all, have a very valuable spiritual formation . . . This is what our priests need, we need formation leaders for our young . . . A little of your missionary spirit would not hurt us . . . We are in missionary country here.'

"Is it not possible. I asked myself, to see and hear in all this a call from the Spirit to the Spiritans? What a fruitful exchange there could be. We could bring our missionary spirit, our solid Libermann spirituality, and our world wide missionary experience . . . We could receive so much from the Orientals: their wisdom, their liturgy, and above all, for the universal mission of the Church, the generosity of their young people . . . "

What We See . . .

Travelling through the Provinces and Districts. we discover everywhere signs of the presence of a new "Mission" and a new orientation of our commitments. Some of these signs are very real, indeed, and gave us great cause for hope.

 Our first priority for animation, according to Guidelines for Animation, is that of building Christian communities, the care of religious and priestly vocations, the formation of a committed and responsible laity. We are finding evidence of initiatives in these areas in the annual reports which we are receiving. More and more we seem to be trying to contribute, to the development of the local Churches, especially toward self sufficiency in personnel.

- More and more our presence is expressing itself in terms of "service" under the responsibility of the bishops. We believe firmly in participating in the priorities of the local Church. We note, though, the difficulty at times of joining integration into the local Church with our presence and activity as missionaries, properly so called.
- We are becoming conscious of the need of sensitizing communities and local (churches) to being missionary. "Make us missionaries; give us your religious spirit. This is what we expect from you." (A bishop to the Spiritans of a certain District)
- Along these lines, to our concern for priestly and religious vocations must be added, a concern for developing missionaries in the local churches in the places where we are working. Thus, the question of Spiritans from Africa and other developing countries acquires a new perspective.
- Increasingly, we seem to be pondering some basic realities: "We are too wellestablished." "We do not dare to take risks." "We are confusing ourselves too much with the local churches." "Since the General Chapter of 1974, any commitment is considered as a missionary commitment." One gets the distinct impression that the desire for a new start is quite evident among us.
- Updating courses are now quite customary and continuing formation teams have been established. We are planning mobile teams, even international ones.
- Pilot teams and renewed communities are coming into being in our Provinces and Districts.
- The projects of the young, formulated in dialogue with those in charge, are reflecting the new idea of Mission. To lend an ear to them all; to give each one his chance, is promising for the apostolate and a definite asset for the Congregation.
- Mutual aid and solidarity are developing. In witness of this, we cite the recent meetings of the different groups of Principal Superiors, inter-Provincial consultations, and the support for Angola and for the new foundations.
- We are searching for some action in the area of "exchanges among the Churches" especially in countries or continents which traditionally have a one-dimensional view of things. It would be good, for example,

- if missionaries from the Third World could bring testimonies from their Churches to the Churches of Europe. As another example, we could cite the fact that several of our houses, in a diversity of works, would welcome the presence of Africans.
- Some Provinces are reacting to "a new missionary era" with a new style of missionary animation. They are forming communities which are "centers of religious and missionary life" and mounting a complete research effort into the various ways of formation, preferring to take risks rather than abandon a project. In one or other Province, new forms of belonging to the Congregation are also being developed.
- Some young people and some not so young, in an ever growing number, are committing themselves or are pondering a commitment to "frontier-situations," an opening to non-christian religions, Islam, in particular. They hope to seek out those who are the most alienated to announce the Gospel, to become truly, men who know no boundaries. They hope to be open and accessible, ministers of reconciliation and of communion among peoples, cultures and religions; ministers who will oppose oppressive structures and defend the defenseless.

We have already listed 12 signs and we must stop. Let us add, though, not a new element, but that which is the result of all these, spiritual renewal.

It could well be said that we are being optimistic! Leave us with our optimism. We know the difficulties well enough, and lest we forget, there are some who make it their duty to constantly remind us of them.

Behind the signs we list on these pages, one might discern the profiles of some well-known confreres, in whose faces are reflected the signs of hope which we have tried to gather and to share with you. We leave them nameless, though, lest, by oversight, we offend anyone.

In the next issue we shall continue our investigation of Commitments and Priorities by pointing out the developments and the demands of "Mission" which we have discerned from a study of the signs. Any suggestions you may have to offer are useful to us. Together we shall find our way!

The Generalate Team

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I/D 5

The Generalate Team / 76-3, March 1976

Our Commitments and Our Priorities

2 - The Developments

Dear Confreres.

In the last issue of I/D we began a series of reflections on our commitments and our priorities, with a discussion of the signs of these, as they manifest themselves in the Congregation. We propose now to continue these reflections, as we consider certain developments in the world and in the Church which have had, and continue to have, a deep impact on "Mission."

For the last twenty years, we have been in a process of change, which has resulted, not in the end of "Mission" but rather in the more contemporary missionary ideas, which we have already outlined in our discussion of the signs of change as we see them.

Only recently, one of us made the observation that we have really underestimated the missionary's evangelic capacity for conversion. The same faith in Christ and in the Mission which once inspired missionaries to spread the Gospel within the religious and cultural context of the time in which they lived, is still able to animate today's missionaries to witness to the Gospel in the cultural and religious context of our time, whatever the cost in time and effort.

The Generalate Team

Developments in the world

Certain facts take on new importance today, if we bear in mind that the "missions" of the past were almost exclusively in the Third World. Nor can we forget that the age of great missionary expansion was also an age of discovery and conquest, starting for the most part from Europe, the continent of the old colonizing countries.

The Third World is awakening, former colonies are becoming independent states. Very deep

yearnings are stirring these young nations, and all else being equal, the other countries in this part of the world as well. Felt at every level, are their yearnings for effective liberation, political, economical, social and cultural; for research in human promotion and development, all joined to the will to control their own destiny.

Europe is loosing its political supremacy and is becoming more defined by its own boundaries. Developing countries are quick to denounce exploitation by the richer countries of the world.

Other facts too, merit our attention. In the first place, we must mention the birth and the development of the modern world through a rapidly advancing science and technology, which prompted the Church to aggiornamento. We must note too that the world, since the development of mass media, is now a global village. The phenomena of migration and urbanization, the tendency toward socialization, the population explosion, the proportionately great number of young people, all these in the countries of the Third World, are facts which we cannot ignore.

1. On the whole question of development in the world, the Church and the Mission, we recommend Father Pierre Schouver's book, *The Church and the Mission*, (Paris, 1975: Centurion Press). Father Schouver, a Spiritan, was a professor at Chevilly up to 1975. Presently, he is in the Central African Republic. His book effectively traces the important developments.

2. We recommend also the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI, December 1975. The Synod of 1974, unable to agree on a text of evangelization, left it to the Pope to produce it. A very interesting document for us

Changes in the Church and in Mission

1 - We've gone from "the missions" to Mission . . .

Formerly, when we spoke of "the missions" we meant territories situated, almost exclusively,

1

in the Third World and confided to the missionary institutes.

But the Church has become aware of the modern world which has developed independently of her, and in which there are places and social groups which have never heard the Gospel, particularly in the so-called Christian countries. Missionary situations, we find, exist all over the world. In this context, the Church is beginning to have a better understanding of what is essential to her, of what constitutes her raison d'être: the Mission to the world, the whole world. The Mission extends to the five continents; "it tries to reach all men in all their social groupings."

Missionary institutes too, are re-orienting themselves. They are ordering their missionary service within the Mission of the Church. Their horizons are widening to include all five continents. They are passing from "the missions" to Mission. To continue to speak about "the missions" in the old sense is to reflect a past which is gone, especially since "the missions" of the old days have now become the local Churches.

While the transition from "the missions" to Mission opens up new possibilities for the missionary institutes, it also puts them in the position of having to make choices. It is forcing them to become mobile, available. Here too, though, there is also the risk of dissipating effort, of coming to see as missionary, any kind of apostolate whatever. Finally, it poses the question of the missionary identity of each Congregation.

2 - We've gone from "missionary institutes" to a totally missionary Church...

Formerly, Mission, in the sense of announcing the Gospel to far-off countries which had never heard it and of spreading the Church by making converts, was, above all, the specialty of the missionary institutes.

Faced with an ever-widening task of evangelization, and thanks to a deeper appreciation of the theology of the Church as the People of God, the Church now sees herself as totally missionary: "The whole Church is missionary; the work of evangelization is a fundamental duty of the People of God." (Ad Gentes, 35)

The missionary institutes too, are re-adjusting their focus. They are coming to see themselves as missionary, within the context of a totally missionary Church.

This transition from "missionary" to "the whole Church as missionary" is forcing the missionary institutes to look for their role in

this new situation. Pathways are opening up which, with increasing clarity, present the following possibilities:

- to sensitize local communities and Churches to their missionary dimension;
- to recruit missionaries in the local Churches;
- to be alert to situations which seem to escape the institutional Church;
- to be aware that there will always be difficult tasks needing men and women who are free and mobile, men and women religious.

3 - We've gone from "missions" to local Churches . . .

In the past "missions" were confided to the responsibility of the missionary institutes.

These "missions" have developed, due in great part to the work of the missionaries, and now they have become the local or particular Churches.

The Synod of 1974, also called the "Synod of the Bishops of the Third World," revealed the broad extent of the reality of the particular Churches, which did not hesitate to voice their demands. We cite here, one speaker from the many who stressed this essential note:

"The 'missions' have become the local Churches... they have grown up. This marks a turning-point in the history of the Church in Africa. The missionary period is over. This does not mean, however, that it is the end of evangelization. What it does mean, as Pope Paul VI said on the occasion of his visit to Uganda, is: 'You Africans have become your own missionaries.' In other words, what still remains to be done, i.e. evangelization, is the responsibility of the African Church from now on." (Bishop James Sangu, of Mbeye)

We want to stress this important turning point which will be made clearer and more precise in what follows: it is the Church which is responsible for evangelization.

4 - We've gone from "The Church: one and monolithic" to "The Church: one and pluriform."...

This transition is like a beautiful page from the history of a family which is still very dear to us. The Church used to be identified with the West. She formulated her faith and organized her life according to the culture of Europe. At the time of the discoveries and conquests of new lands, she too went out for spiritual conquest. She set up branches in the Third World, giving birth to daughter Churches, strong in their resemblance to the mother Church, for at the time it was normal to reproduce the same model.

The daughter Churches developed, until the time arrived for independence. When they got their freedom, the young nations and other countries of the Third World fought for full liberation on every level so that their destiny could be in their own hands. "Human promotion," "development," "authenticity," etc. became the key words.

These daughter Churches now claim adult status as well. They decry the relationship of mother Church and daughter Church. They want to be responsible for themselves, to wear the cultural identity of their people, to participate in the deepest aspirations of their continent. And in Europe and elsewhere, the Church is becoming aware that she is no longer adapted to the new era.

Over the last fifteen years, the Church, "one and monolithic" has been evolving towards the Church "one and multiform." Mission too, is undergoing the same evolution:

- Nowadays, in the context of Mission, we speak rather of "sister Churches," or particular Churches, each responsible for evangelization and co-responsible with the other Churches.
- In Mission, the language is: dialogue, exchange, mutual aid; we are opening ourselves up to mutual enrichment among the Churches.
- At the same time, we are concerned with the relationship between particular Churches and the Universal Church.
- Great importance is given to the incarnation and the indigenization of the particular
 Church in and by the culture of the country,
 as well as to participation in the deepest
 aspirations of the people.

Taking all of this into account, missionary institutes are clarifying their own orientations:

- From now on, the missionary is both "sent" and "called." This seems to include being "sent and called" for precise tasks. Specialization in view of determined functions can take on more importance.
- Missionary presence and activity are seen now and understood as exchange and mutual aid among Churches. There must be great concern that a true exchange, one in both directions particularly, be developed. There is an important role for the missionary here.

- In the relationship between particular Church and Universal Church, the missionary is called to be a "witness to the Universal."
- Great stress is placed upon incarnation and indigenization which demand particular attention to the culture and the aspirations of the people.

This entire evolution in the Church calls the missionary institutes to a "ministry of communion," and seems to demand that an institute have at the same time the dual characteristics of unity and pluriformity.

5 - The missionary in the local Church which is responsible for evangelization . . .

It is an established fact today that the local Church is responsible for evangelization. Because of this, any missionary service is rendered under the responsibility of that Church and as part of its Pastoral project. Thus, it is that it is indispensable that the missionary be always attentive to that Church and to its priorities.

This new situation seems to deprive the missionary of his responsibilities. "Do I no longer have any say at all?" we hear, or "Can't I take any initiative?" "Of what Church am I a member?" The answer to these questions is simple: the missionary from abroad is a full member of the host Church; if he is a priest, he is a member of that presbyterium.

A further and more fundamental question arises: "In this new context, what does it mean to be a missionary? to be a religious?" This is a gentle, perhaps even a providential, prodding to missionary institutes to re-study and to deepen their sense of vocation.

6 - Commitments and Priorities of missionary institutes and of the local Churches . . .

"Service rendered in co-responsibility" naturally raises the question, for missionary institutes, of what are their priorities and what commitments, taking into consideration both the option of the local Church and the objectives of the institute. To sacrifice one for the other will do no one any good.

In order to work in an environment of truly fraternal communion, we must see more clearly the need for dialogue and understanding. We must try as well to sharpen our view of apostolic priorities and objectives from both perspectives.

With this in mind, institutes are becoming more and more attentive to the Churches.

Situations do vary though, and so do priorities. In the Third World where a great proportion of our missionaries are working these priorities seem to stand out:

- insistence upon religious acculturation (incarnation, indigenization);
- formation of christian communities, small enough to be human;
- formation of priestly and religious vocations and of a committed and responsible laity;
- special attention to the young who make up half the population everywhere in the Third World;
- other preoccupations, such as catechesis in the context of the tendency towards socialization and the nationalization of schools, efforts to reach the elite who seem to be eluding the Church, development, etc.

Taking these priorities into account and the evolution of Mission, the institutes are clarifying their missionary objectives. While these will vary according to charisms and particular situations, we can point out the most important perspectives which are of special interest to us:

- Increasingly, there is a desire for the type of missionary service which contributes to the development of the local Churches, towards the point where they can be selfsufficient, even in financial matters. While applauding great availability and taking account of persons, we do not think that the work of keeping established communities going is the task of the missionaries except as a temporary assistance or replacement.
- By reason of the fact that every particular Church is and must be missionary, greater stress should be placed upon the task of making the local Churches missionary (cf. above, 2). We must be anxious to recruit missionaries in the local Churches. This should lo longer be done with a view towards recruitment for a Congregation, but rather towards promoting the appearance of missionaries who can take advantage of belonging to a Congregation to be able to live out the missionary vocation of the Churches in culturally diverse contexts. More and more religious are expected to communicate the "religious spirit."
- In the category of Mission as an exchange between Churches, missionaries are more frequently called upon to transcend the fron-

- tiers and barriers of their own institutes and to find ways of promoting exchange and communion between Churches.
- First evangelization regains its importance, but we must remember that now evangelization extends to dialogue and the improvement of the human condition.
- Institutes are insisting more and more upon dialogue with non-Christian religions, especially Islam. The affirmation of freedom of conscience and the recognition of value in other religions modify the approach to be taken to the non-Christian or traditional religions.

These approaches, if one were to follow them assiduously, could result in a real renewal of missionary institutes.

7 - We've gone from one kind of presence to another . . .

Today, missionary institutes are trying to establish a type of presence which is more in line with the changes we have outlined. Some characteristics of this new presence are:

- a "light" presence: the commitment "en masse" which we knew in the past is beginning to weigh heavy. Hence the present tendency to break up "blocks" as much as possible;
- a diversified presence: a small number from each of several Congregations to work in the same diocese or the same country as needed. Hence the present tendency towards diversity of commitments;
- a mobile presence: while we must be faithful to commitments we have made, and while we realize that cultural adaptation takes time, still it seems that a certain sedentary quality has taken hold of missionaries and that they have allowed themselves to become prisoners of their own work;
- an international presence: this represents one of the most meaningful aspects of what the missionary ought to be: a "man without frontiers," a "meeting-point between peoples and races";
- a witnessing presence: the witness of one's life is "the first means of evangelization." (Evangelii Nuntiandi)

In the next issue of I/D we'll look at the repercussions of these changes upon our commitments and our priorities and how we, taking the signs of hope as our starting point, can make even further progress.

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I/D 6

The Generalate Team / 76-4, April-May 1976

Our Commitments and Our Priorities

3 - Requests and Readjustments

Dear Confreres:

In what direction is the Congregation moving? What are our commitments? What are our priorities?

In I/D 4, we looked at the "signs" which point out for us the directions of Mission today. We tried to read these signs, not on paper, but rather in the life and missionary activity of our Provinces and Districts.

In I/D 5, we reviewed the developments taking place in the mission of the Church, faced as she is with changes both in herself and in the world; developments which suggest new missionary approaches better suited to the times in which we live.

Now, we can be more specific about our commitments and priorities. And, lest we detach ourselves from the experience of real life, we prefer to suggest what these might be, as we see them in the requests we get for help and hear them in the voices of our confreres.

It is our hope that we can be the place where all these voices will be heard. May we say, in this regard, to every member of the Congregation, that there is a standing invitation to you to come to the Generalate. Why? As Saint John says, "Come and see." In any case, personal contacts, conversations and close ties; the sense of belonging to a family much larger than our own place within it; — these are values more precious than silver or gold. They are already a step in the right direction.

The Generalate Team

From a letter to Father General . . .

"We can say that in many ways we Spiritans are seeking to follow the movement in which the Council recognized the finger of the Holy Spirit:

- "by being at the service of the local Churches, who bear the primary responsibility for evangelization in their own countries;
- "by our concern in forming Christian communities in the districts and villages and social situations where the real life of people is lived.
- "by a proclamation of the Word of God much closer to the language and to the life-concerns of the people.
- "by a greater attention to the collective realities in which the future of the people is at stake.
- "finally, by a new kind of relationship between the home country and the host country of the expatriate missionaries who become a medium of exchange between Churches. Through them the old Churches may learn the problems and the riches of the young Churches, while in their own country, the Christians of the young Churches are introduced to the Church's universal dimension." (Father Pierre Schouver)

From the Province of Germany . . .

The Province presents these very precise suggestions:

- "to help the local Churches to become missionary; to dedicate themselves to the formation of priests, not only for their own country, but to form missionaries for other countries as well...
- "to continue to assist our foundations in Nigeria, East and West Africa and Angola...
- "to form the young confreres in our Province, not for this or that precise region where we still have our own bishops but rather for those areas where the needs are most urgent...
- "from the financial point of view, to help the local Church, not primarily by direct help to our confreres, but more fundamentally, to help the local Church become missionary." (Father Steinbrecher)

Appeals for Help

Numerous indeed are the requests for personnel which arrive almost daily at the Generalate. We have selected a few of them, first because of their urgency for the Church, but also as a possible contribution to the renewal of the Congregation and its missionary commitments, and to suggest directions which we might take.

ANGOLA: The African bishops are planning new pastoral approaches and for these they need new men. Bishop de Nascimento of Malanje leans toward mobile teams. "I truly believe," he writes, "that instead of trying to fill the void left by the departure of the missionaries, we should develop new pastoral orientations. The geographical centers formerly called 'missions,' would yield their place, to a certain extent, to specialized teams, which would function as mobile units ready to respond to local needs." As his priorities, the Bishop has set up the following: the formation of catechists and community leaders; the incarnation of the Gospel message; vocations and education. To our proposal for an international team, he replied: "Your project of forming a team composed of members of several nationalities has my complete approval." To this end, the Superior General has made an urgent appeal; as of now, we have had four or five replies.

Angola which is laying the groundwork for contemporary missionary approaches, could be a proving ground for the Congregation; a test of our capacity to respond to priority appeals and to new missionary objectives; of the possibility of our crossing the frontiers of language, of Provinces, of Districts to work wherever the call is urgent.

PARAGUAY: Although we have been in Paraguay since 1967, until very recently we had only two Spiritans still there. And then, some ordinary people banded together to raise the money to make it possible for Father Joseph Harris to contact the Generalate and the Provinces in search of additional personnel. As of now, two Fathers, one French and the other Canadian have responded to this appeal, in which we see a distinct priority for us.

We would like to see realized in Paraguay, a commitment of the very type one wishes for today. We would like to have three or four international teams, if possible, capable of working within the pastoral priorities of the Diocese of Concepcion and the Latin American episcopate. Orientated particularly toward the poor, and their desperate need for liberation, these teams we hope would bring deep discernment to their task, and would work in close collaboration with the bishop.

SUDAN: In the Sudan, the massive withdrawal of white missionaries has created a very distressing situation. The Diocese of Khartoum is pressing us, pleading insistently, that we send one or two missionaries from Nigeria, whom they feel would be accepted in Sudan. We have begun negotiations with our Nigerian confreres.

This appeal, though not unique of its kind, is at the same time a sign that Mission today demands institutes which are truly international; institutes which include among their members men from several, rather than from a single contient. In effect, the tensions and the conflicts between countries and continents, stemming from a colonial past or from inequality or injustice, severely limit the activities of a "one-dimensional" Institute or one whose members, for the most part, come from the same continent or country.

OTHER PLACES: There are requests for African Spiritans: in Canada, for missionary animation; at the London Missionary Institute for exchange between the Churches. In Mauritius, we need one or two Indian missionaries to work among the 500,000 Hindus there. In many of our Districts we are working in a strong Islamic milieu. For these, we need Islamic specialists; missionaries coming from an Arab or Muslim background could certainly facilitate a Gospel witness to the world of Islam.

Clearly, we need confreres from other continents, to accomplish our mission within the Church; to develop and expand the truly missionary work of dialogue, exchange and mutual assistance between Churches; to make us better qualified to incarnate the Gospel in countries and cultures; to make our Congregation a clearer sign of the mission of Christ, who wills to bring together people of every race and language. Finally, we must bring all our efforts to bear in fostering missionary vocations within the local Churches.

GHANA: The Diocese of Tamala, in northern Ghana, is still in the stage of "first evangelization" with Catholics numbering only 11,500 among a population of 850,000. Bishop Dery has hopes for at least a small Spiritan team, adaptable to this new Missionary style. He would like to have personnel versed in Islam, to promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims, and personnel as well for ministry to students. First evangelization, dialogue with Islam, student ministry, priorities every one of them, but especially first evangelization!

PAKISTAN: A pressing appeal comes from Bishop Andreotti, auxiliary Bishop of Lyallpur, seeking missionaries for the diocese and for the evangelization of tribes in the Sind and in the region of Punjab: "When the question of preaching the Gospel to these tribes was presented to the Episcopal Conference in March, 1976, the bishops, realizing the importance of this apostolate, decided to make this project the responsibility of the entire hierarchy... It would be ideal if you could find some way to help us."

This appeal interests us for many reasons. "First evangelization, under the responsibility of the Episcopal Conference," is an application of the Guidelines for Animation, N. 2, which insists that our missionary service is part of the universal Mission of the Church, and makes it possible for us to respond to urgent missionary situations wherever they present themselves, even while taking into account our actual commitments. It is besides, a very important opening toward the East, where two, far-too-isolated, Spiritan teams are already working, one in Bangladesh and the other in Papua-New Guinea. Isn't it asking too much for us to believe that the old missionary Congregations are not able to go beyond the frontiers of a completed epoch in the history of the Missions?

TEAMS: Bishop Paulino Livramento-Evora, of Cabo Verde, would like very much to have a team capable of promoting pastoral renewal in the islands... The Principal Superiors of West-Indies-Guiana send a request, pointing out the necessity for an on-going permanent formation, in common with all the clergy and the bishops, and suggesting the possibility of a mobile Spiritan team, sent by the Generalate, charged with this formation, within the framework of the local pastoral plan.

The idea of mobile teams, called and sent for precise tasks, for short or long term assignments, seems well on the way to becoming one of the forms of future missionary service.

From everywhere, many more requests... The few that we have cited up to now should make us realize to some extent, that the requests, as well as the new missionary possibilities, and the commitments possible on our part, no longer present themselves exactly as they did in the past. While acknowledging these many signs of renewal, let us acknowledge too, the fact that we are having a hard time adjusting our commitments to take directions other than those we have pursued up to the present.

On Commitments

The Provinces and Districts speak: If we were to list the requests and the needs of the Provinces and Districts, several pages would hardly be sufficient. More and more we come up against the problem of personnel. Our fields

have increased but the laborers have grown fewer; maintenance alone which demands the labors of so many immobilizes us; our margin of mobility grows ever more narrow.

And always, the question recurs and recurs, "is what we are doing really missionary work?" There seems to be that desire to start again, to launch out, which we spoke about in the "Signs," which manifests itself a little everywhere. We feel that this is important and that it should be developed. Let's cite a few examples:

- Kenya tells us: "The urban apostolate and the apostolate of the young are great problems; problems which we find ourselves too poorly equipped to tackle."
- The team in the Bahamas is committing itself "to work with some of the poorest of the poor today immigrants and refugees, who live a life of insecurity, generally in an illegal status, in which tomorrow is always a question mark... a life of unemployed men and humiliated workers." Other provinces too are engaged in ministry to migrants.
- A team in Ethiopia insists, "We want to say it very clearly that we are here to bring the Gospel message to the poor and the abandoned, who have never, or scarcely heard it; to help establish young Churches among the people who accept the Gospel we proclaim, and to occupy ourselves in works of development..."
- Gambia calls our attention to two points:
 Our future commitment here should have
 always in mind the Africanization of our
 personnel and that the final aim of our
 work is to serve a minority of Christians
 and a majority of Moslems.
- In Gabon, a mobile team, responsible to the bishops, is travelling through the country promoting pastoral renewal, with excellent results.
- Some of the Provinces are not hesitating to invest personnel in their respective countries, for a fresh start with the new Mission in mind. An openness among the Provinces is developing and we are beginning to see that we must help each other in difficulties. More and more too, we see new emphasis being placed on formation.

Really, what strikes us most in our visits, in our personal contacts and in the annual reports is the magnificent generosity of the missionaries, capable of undertaking everything, of trying anything for Christ and his mission.

As this went to press, Cardinal Zoungrana asked the Superior General in Accra, for personnel for a chaplaincy to African students in Europe.

Priorities

Here we would like to state simply what we consider to be important for us:

It is the mission of Christ in the world which brings us together. It evolves certainly; but we are sure that it will go on forever; we shall never be out of work. Our strength is the Lord's word: "Go... I am with you." It is in His promise: "I shall give you a strength, that of the Spirit, and you shall be witnesses to Me." This is the most important baggage we carry; "Evangelii Nuntiandi" insistently reminds us of it (No. 75). It is the priority of priorities.

Those who went before us planted the seed in a new and difficult soil and the plant spring up and developed. They did their work well; they were real missionaries, according to their Today, the Spiritans of our generation continue in the same fields, giving much of their time to their upkeep. Perhaps this labor with the growing harvest absorbs us too completely and binds us to our works, leaving us little time or liberty to renew ourselves in the sense of Mission today. It is important that we know or re-discover our place in that Mission, in view of the changes in the Church and in the world. Continuing formation and renewal are a necessity if we are to participate actively in the renewal of the Church in her Mission.

Almost everywhere we find some confreres who are already following new directions or experimenting, sometimes at the cost of great difficulty and agonizing uncertainty. But we must be ready to run some risks and take some bold chances for the sake of the Gospel. This is absolutely necessary for a Congregation which wants to avoid growing moribund and being swallowed up; which wishes rather to answer to the demands and to the needs of the times. It can be a source of light to others, and a mutual help in a spirit of solidarity. It is here that we see signs of hope and vitality, however modest these signs may be.

The number of our young members is diminishing at the same rate as the average age in the Congregation increases. The young are becoming more and more a minority in danger of not finding exactly their place in the Institute. We can imagine the consequences, if that should happen. Rightly, they want to live in tune with their times and, to fulfill the mission of today within the framework of our common commitment. We will be presenting to the Enlarged Council a project for a meeting of young Spiritans.

Keeping in mind the evolution which has brought us to: "The whole Church is missionary" (Ad Gentes, No. 35), we are invited:

to contribute towards bringing this missionary "spirit." to the Churches and communities;

 to recruit lay missionaries, especially fulltime ones.

The whole Church is missionary and must become more so. it is primarily in this spirit that we attach particular importance to Spiritan foundations, in Africa and elsewhere. They will help us to make our contribution to the realization and development of that Mission, which also means; openness, dialogue, exchange, mutual help among Churches. These foundations are necessary too in order to transcend a type of internationality too much limited to the West, bound up with a past which is finished. missionaries, we are still far from adequate signs' of the Mission of Christ to bring together people of every race and tongue. Today, the conflicts, the racism, the exploitation of people of all over the world, cry out for such a sign.

With respect to our commitments, we do right in remaining faithful to commitments made to the local Churches and in following the priorities of the pastoral plans of those Churches. However, "if all things are permitted us, not all things are expedient." There is also the project of the Institute which, in the final analysis, is a commitment to the universal Church to consecrate ourselves especially to the mission in terms of certain objectives. Let it suffice to make a few reflections:

- we have to give preference to "missionary situations," which come to light in the development of Mission and are summarized in I/D 5. We also suggest, in the several appeals cited in this issue, situations which have especially captured our interest.
- at present we still seem to be too devoted to a policy of "keeping things going" in terms of the geographic and linguistic division into provinces and Districts attached to those provinces. We run the risk of maintaining too long, our congregational and national "blocks." We still show strong marks of an age which is past (an age of colonialism?).
- It is difficult for us to respond to the priorities in the Mission of the Church today, and to do so in a style better adapted to the changes which have occurred. (cf. appeals)

That is why the recent letters from the Superior General have been insisting upon points which must be priorities for us: mobility and internationality. Let us hope that once more we may find the mobility we once had, which permitted us to respond to urgent appeals of the Mission of the Church, — appeals like those which we have noted as priorities in this issue.

It is possible. Already we are seeing signs of hope.

The Generalate Team

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I/D 7

The Generalate Team / 76-5, June 1976

Enlarged Council - Solidarity

The Day After the Ascension

It was the day after the feast of the Ascension, as we assembled in the large parlor of the Generalate, not unlike the Apostles in the Cenacle, to begin the first session of the First Enlarged Council, on the subject of Solidarity. We wanted to have this meeting during the Pentecost Novena, a very special time for Spiritans, a time for more intense devotion to the Spirit.

Right at the beginning, a meaningful thing happened. In order to facilitate matters, it had been proposed to divide into two workgroups, one English-speaking, the other French-speaking. After only fifteen minutes of separation, there was a reaction; "it won't work this way; we have to break these blocks' and work together in international groups." This episode was the "flag-raiser" for the whole Council; getting beyond frontiers, in a word, internationality.

The Eve of Pentecost

The Eve of Pentecost was the day when three projects of highest priority were voted unanimously: Angola, Paraguay and Pakistan. Three projects, three continents! Three projects undertaken in co-responsibility by all the Major Superiors. Three projects which, taken together, will test some of our options in Mission today and our will to begin anew: urgent missionary situations; international teams; poverty and liberation; first evangelization; dialogue with Islam and an opening to the Far East! There was great happiness indeed. on the eve of Pentecost!

1. Missionary Priorities

Another small but meaningful note was the fact that all committees changed the proposed order of subjects to be treated, and put mission priorities in first place. "It's Mission that is our

common concern," said one. This faith in the Mission was really striking, and it was obvious that we all shared it.

"For the sake of the Gospel," we face the double problem of our diminishing personnel and the advancing age of the confreres, which makes it impossible for us to hold on to all the commitments we have inherited from the past. "For the sake of the Gospel," we are willing to respond to new and urgent appeals and to commit ourselves to the missionary needs of today. "We must not follow a policy whereby our present commitments would prevent us from undertaking new ones." "It is our duty as a Congregation to respond to new appeals of Mission." These are some of the statements by which working committees expressed this willingness of the Enlarged Council to reexamine our commitments and determine our priorities in line with No. 13 of Guidelines for Animation.

The Enlarged Council's decisions concerning missionary priorities represent a first step, a realistic one, full of promise:

- "Provincial and Principal Superiors will send to the General Council by October 1, a list of the most urgent priorities in their circumscriptions."
- "The General Council, taking into account all its sources of information, will present to the whole Congregation three projects of highest priority." (cf. p. 2)
- "Provincial and Principal Superiors commit themselves, in dealing with the confreres of their jurisdiction, to support the requests for personnel in view of these three projects..."

From the very first day of our work together, we experienced something which would only intensify as the days went on: the sense of co-responsibility or collegiality of the Major Superiors in the work, the orientation and the commitments of the Congregation. A giant step had been taken in getting beyond the hidebound divisions of Provinces and Districts (i.e. the Provinces and "their" Districts). Lived experience transcends structures. Fraternal communion is stronger than power

2. Internationality

The decisions under this heading were not sensational. Let us just mention:

- "It is expected that all confreres strive to become bilingual (i.e. with knowledge of two languages which are 'internationally useful')."
- "Under the responsibility of the Major Superiors, programs for the formation of young Spiritans will include obligatory study and practice in the use of at least one living foreign language."

But there was more to it than those few decisions. The Enlarged Council of 1976 was strongly marked by internationality, in the sense of transcendence of all sorts of frontiers, linguistic, national, continental, etc. . . . It was involved in most of the decisions and orientations arrived at, with respect to all the themes concerning solidarity. The Council decided: "We must develop more and more the international character of the Congregation as the 1974 Chapter recommended." And we shall. "Why all this stress on internationality, all of a sudden? Is it a new fad?" Several reasons were brought out by the members of the Enlarged Council:

- Today, Mission is also called mutual help and exchange between Churches. Let us make our contribution to this Mission, we who call upon the richness of so many particular Churches.
- At a time of international tension, international conflicts, racism, international injustices, let us be a sign of the brotherhood that can be; a sign of the Mission of Christ which aims to bring together, to unite, to reconcile. Let ours be a "ministry of communion."
- The current insistence upon the Local Church runs the risk of leading to a certain turning-in of these Churches upon themselves. Let us be witnesses to the universal.
- National blocks are less and less tolerated.
 The past has a lesson to teach us here.
- Some missionary situations require international teams. Some ask for missionaries from the Third World. Some seek specialists whom the particular Provinces would find it hard to furnish. We must prepare ourselves for a better service in the Mission, for a better deployment of personnel.

Above all, it is today's Mission which is pushing us toward internationality, but there is as well, our concern for our own Congregation:

• The Congregation is too Western. Its members come, for the most part, from countries frequently exposed by the Third World.

- The Congregation, especially in its organization, is still strongly marked by an epoch which is past. A limited degree of internationality is no longer enough for our times. The centers of gravity of both the Church and the world are changing. Third World peoples are becoming more and more important, especially in the East.
- Internationality is also a necessity for coming to the aid of provinces in difficulty; for developing our unity.

As one participant remarked, "Internationality could well be the test of whether or not we are, and will continue to be, a living Congregation."

3. Spiritan Foundations

All the reasons mentioned above also underlie the question of new Spiritan Foundations. The principal object, however, is to recruit missionaries in the local Churches.

A special committee studied the whole question, making use of an informational document which drew attention to these facts about our foundations:

- In Nigeria, six Spiritans will be ordained this year. We have 39 priests, 50 scholastics, and five novices. The District needs two philosophy professors.
- In the East African Foundation (Usa River) there are 11 students in the orientation program, nine novices, seven students in philosophy and nine in theology. Here too there is need for personnel.
- In Angola, a novitiate was opened in November, 1975. At Holy Ghost College, there are five theologians, three philosophers, and 17 boys finishing secondary school.
- In South Brazil, there are now 15 students in philosophy and seven in theology at Sao Paulo.
- The United States Province West, in September 1976, will open a house of studies for Blacks in Louisiana.
- The District of Puerto Rico will soon open a house for aspirants.

The committee gave most of its attention to the project of a French-speaking foundation. There are already some requests, and a decision had to be made for these candidates: "They will spend a year teaching in the Apostolic School of Ihiala (Nigeria). This will enable them to improve their knowledge of English. The following year they will be admitted to the novitiate at Awo-Omama (Nigeria)."

For the future, the Enlarged Council approved propositions which will be presented at the Pan-African Spiritan Conference in December 1976:

• the creation of a French-speaking novitiate;
• a common theologists for all African Spiritans.

4. Formation

Internationality and co-responsibility, dominant characteristics of the 1976 Enlarged Council, also put their mark upon the discussions and the decisions concerning formation.

There were some concrete problems which served as the point of departure: the diminishing number of young confreres, their situation as a small minority, change or disappearance of the large scholasticates of former times, search for new patterns, grouping in consortia, a too nationalistic formation, lack of cultural exchange, etc. . . .

In this area, as in so many others, it was principally Mission and our missionary options which caused us to give particular attention to the period of formation. We can truly say that our missionary policy is becoming clearer and clearer now, and the General Council is very grateful to the Major Superiors and those whom they represent for their important contribution and support in this respect.

As soon as we turn our attention to missionary situations, no matter where they may be, as soon as we clarify our priorities at Congregation level, as soon as we try to transcend our many kinds of frontiers in view of better service in the Mission (cf. Internationality), we come face to face with new directions which we must take regarding the period of formation. Our houses of formation throughout the Congregation must take inspiration from the very terminology of today's mission: openness, exchange, mutual help, meeting-of-minds, inter-cultural encounters.

It is against this background of Mission problems that the decisions made by the Enlarged Council must be understood. It must be remembered too that they represent only a beginning:

- "... the Enlarged council recommends an exchange of students among the different Provinces. This implies that the Major Superiors keep one another informed of possibilities in their areas for formation; houses, locations and occasions favorable to international meetings; types of academic programs, diplomas and degrees obtainable."
- "With respect to consortia where we have an obligation to furnish teaching personnel, the Enlarged council requests:
 - that the Provincials concerned present to the General Council a clear listing of the needs of their Provinces;
 - that the General Council present to the other provinces these calls for international help."

Finally, there was an important decision which will have to be made more specific in the months to come by all the Superiors and Directors concerned

 "The Enlarged Council decides that there will take place periodically, international meetings of Spiritans in formation. Under the auspices of the General Council and the Provincials, these meetings will be occasions for a 'formation-experience' and will last for several weeks during the summer."

The spirit of what was said about formation goes much further than the mere letter of the decisions. It is a spirit of openness, mutual help, exchange and meeting-of-minds at Congregation level, on the part of directors, professors and students.

5. International Meeting of Young Spiritans

An event! A one-time affair! A meeting of young Spiritans from all countries, races and languages. A meeting going beyond frontiers!

Almost everywhere in our Provinces and Districts, the young represent a minority. This is a phenomenon which will become more and more evident. We know the difficulties every minority meets with.

Times have changed. The Church and her Mission have evolved. The young have different ideals. They have their own problems. The future is not as clear as it used to be.

It is our hope that the young may have the chance to "feel at home" in today's Mission and in the Congregation. It is our hope that the young Spiritans, scattered all over the Congregation, in small numbers in our Provinces and Districts, may have a chance to meet one another, to find out what they have in common, and, above all, to live through an experience together.

One Provincial spoke of a "new deal," a new beginning, a new upsurge for the Congregation. And it will be to the benefit of all of us.

A bold project! There will be no lack of objections and difficulties. We must place the same confidence in the young as we place in the older confreres.

The Enlarged Council was not afraid to vote unanimously in favor of it! "The Enlarged Council decides that there shall be an international meeting of young Spiritans. The General Council, in dialogue with the Major Superiors, is responsible for the realization of this project." (Enclosed you will find a more explicit presentation of this project.)

6. Finance and Pension/Insurance

The elderly confreres were not forgotten. The 1974 Chapter spoke of the need to establish a pension fund in all the Provinces. With this in mind, a considerable sum of money was distributed among the Provinces by the General Administration "taking into account their diversity and the solidarity which should exist throughout the whole Congregation." This tee was done

in an admirable spirit of solidarity and understanding.

7. Three Priorities for the Congregation

The Eve of Pentecost was an important day for us all. What happened that day?

The members of the Enlarged Council had asked the General Council to present three priorities for the Congregation as a whole. The Major Superiors would make a judgment about them. If they approved of them, they would commit themselves in solidarity to furnish the necessary personnel. All this was important because of the significance of the projects and of the response which would be given.

Angola (Africa): The situation is urgent, the conditions are existing and the pastoral project needs international teams. "Project Angola," worked out in dialogue with the Bishops of Malanje and Saurimo, envisions two or three teams for these two dioceses for the following objectives: a mobile team for the formation of catechists and community leaders; teams for ongoing formation for priests and religious, for youth work and communications. There is already one team made up of one Portuguese and two English Fathers; a French confrere and a young confrere from Ireland have also been proposed.

Paraguay (Latin America): Urgent missionary situations in line with our options; poor people, with no one to take care of them; youth work; a pastoral plan inspired by Medellin; basic communities and liberation. One Province, Trinidad, has been active there, but can no longer furnish personnel for a Spiritan presence of the type desired today, i.e. three or four teams, international if possible, offering the opportunity for further internationalization of the Congregation. As a beginner, "Project Paraguay" envisions eight or nine Spiritans to constitute two or three international teams for the Dioceses of Concepcion and Asuncion.

Pakistan (The East-Asia): The first appeals from Pakistan reached us about a year ago. Since then, we have been in regular contact with the Bishops of Lyallpur and Lahore. From our correspondence we know that there is an urgent need of personnel; it is a missionary situation in line with our options: first evangelization among the tribes of Sind and in the Punjab region, dialogue with Islam, pastoral work for forming leaders for small, poor, Christian communities. The General Council was faced with the question: should the Congregation make a commitment in Asia also? To answer it, we needed the advice and the decision of the Enlarged Council.

It would be impossible to adequately describe

what happened during the hour following the presentation of these projects on the eve of Pentecost.

Provincials and Principal Superiors who are known to have "their feet on the ground and their heads on their shoulders" spoke as they never spoke before. They all stressed the need for the Congregation to commit itself to something new, like the projects proposed, and to go even further. Everybody spoke in favor of the venture in the East. One of these days we will publish the important comments which were made. The time came to decide. The vote was unanimous for the three projects.

The vote was decisive, significant, full of meaning. It suggests that:

- The Congregation is committing itself more and more to the missionary tasks of today and of the future.
- The Congregation is open to missionary situations beyond its own frontiers. It can pay attention to them and respond to them.
- The Congregation is open to the East, while still maintaining its privileged ties with Africa. It is taking advantage of an opportunity to become more international, to diversify its commitments more, by a presence on several continents.
- A new strength, that of co-responsibility, is developing in the Congregation and is full of promise. This was made actual, sealed, if you will, by taking on these three projects as a common effort.
- For the General Council, it represents the approval and support of a certain missionary policy, a sign of the confidence and support of the Major Superiors. In return, the General Council expresses its full confidence in the Major Superiors, congratulates them for their spirit of openness and collaboration, and thanks them for their precious contribution to the Enlarged Council and to all our work.

After these decisions had been made, the atmosphere was one of celebration! "Why should we go back to work this afternoon? Why go on discussing the scheduled subject of relationships between Provinces and Districts and the Generalate, now that it was clear that there already exists the best of relationships, collaboration and coresponsibility? Wouldn't it be better to rejoice together as brothers?"

So the last decision of the Enlarged Council was "to declare a holiday." The Superior General's closing address came right from his heart and spoke to our hearts! More than one Provincial "spoke in tongues," the tongues of other Provinces. Than we drank a toast in the wines of our different countries. . . It was the eye of Pentecost!

nformation—documentation

I/D 8

The Generalate Team

November 1976

New Directions for the Congregation

Some points from the Chapters of 1976

THE REVOLUTIONARY CHAPTER (1968-69)

Revolutions, if they are not abortive, usually begin with a period of destruction: long-standing customs fall into disuse, venerable structures crumble and sacred cows are driven mooing plaintively from the roads they have being blocking so successfully in the past. One is conscious for some time more of chaos and disintegration than of rebirth and renewal. But in spite of appearances, the Chapter of 1968-69 was a chapter of renewal. It made possible new directions for the Cogregation. It was a watershed in our history: but, in a watershed, rivers tend to be indecisive; and for a while after 1968 it looked as if the Congregation was dividing itself into small separate little In the name of subsidiarity each Province and "its Districts" was turning in on itself in nationalistic isolation. However, on a watershed small streams wander about apparently aimlessly until one joins another and yet another and a new strong young river begins a confident journey to the ocean.

THE CHAPTER OF 1974: CORESPONSIBILITY

The Capitulants of 1974 were anything but confident: they inspected the Congregation rather like people inspecting their town after a battle: these tottering ruins must be pulled down, this must be rebuilt, new roads must come through here. The capitulants did not want to give up subsidiarity: on the contrary they saw that diversity within the Congregation was an important value, and that it was necessary for unity, to accept diversity. But they became very conscious that the acceptance by all its members of a common responsibility for the Congregation was necessary if subsidiarity and diversity were not to result in fragmentation. The Chapter emphasised the need for coresponsibility especially in finance and personnel and set up the Enlarged Council as a structure for

the expression of the common responsibility of the circumscriptions and the General Council. It saw the Internationality of the Congregation as a positive quality which should be encouraged and which would make it possible for Spiritans to respond positively to the special missionary needs of our time, enabling them to work more effectively for communion between peoples and for reconciliation amongst men. At a time when 'the Congregation' was beginning to mean 'our Province' the Chapter reminded us that our primary membership is of the Congregation. when it stressed that the whole Congregation was our fraternal community. Most important of all, the Chapter gave the Congregation a more theological and conciliar concept of Mission in which the simplistic notion that geographical displacement was an essential constituent of mission gave place to the concept of missionary situations which can exist in almost every country.

THE ENLARGED COUNCIL 1976: NEW DIRECTIONS

If people were afraid that the directives of the Chapter of 1974 would remain in the book, their fears must surely be beginning to be dispelled. When the first Enlarged Council met in Rome this year, the tentative, uncertain intuitions of the capitulants of 1974 were confirmed. The desires for more unity, for more internationality, for more sharing in finance and personnel became stronger, and the feeling that new directions in mission were necessary became explicit and began to find its solution.

It was significant that during the Enlarged Council the linguistic groups spontaneously decided to join multilingual and international groups: they wanted to be international. There was an air of faith and hope and optimism which was infectious. That co-responsibility in matters of finance was not an empty word had been shown by the appeal for help to Angola which was answered in a most generous fashion

by many Districts and by a few Provinces. On its very last day the Council voted for international teams for Paraguay, Angola and Pakistan, with an enthusiasm which might have seemed unreal and inpractical, but which was not. At a time when some of our novitiates are empty it seems strange that the Congregation should be thinking of new missions. However, the history of the Israelites teaches us that during their exile, the People of God, stripped of all possessions, formulated the boldest missionary schemes.

THE CHAPTERS OF 1976: HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

The spirit of hope and faith which was so manifest during the Chapter of 1974 and the Enlarged Council was passed on to the circumscription chapters on 1976. Many Provinces have reason to feel despondent: few more than the Province of Belgium, which was hit so badly by the massacres of Kongolo and which has had very few new members in recent years. But the Belgian Chapter has found a new hope and a new resolution and has turned towards a renewal of the Province in prayer, community life, and by taking new missionary directions. "Let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind" (Rom. 12, 2) was the first message of the Chapter. "We are encouraged by the Enlarged Council to go beyond our limited provincial point of view to open ourselves to the Congregation as a whole".

MISSION TERRITORIES OR MISSION SITUATIONS?

With the foundations of local churches in our traditional mission territories, we have come to realize that mission is a matter of situation, and that a missionary situation can be found in a country of fifteen hundred years of Christianity, just as situations of strong traditional Christianity can be found in what are still being called 'mission territories'.

The English Chapter puts it like this: "Mission was understood as the evangelization of foreign lands, known as Foreign Missions. Today... the universality of Mission is grasped more clearly: The whole Church is Missionary; the work of evangelization is a fundamental duty of the People of God (Ad Gentes, 35). Consequently there is a much fuller awareness of places and social groups that have never heard the Gospel even in our post-Christian countries; missionary situations exist all over the world. Formerly, missionary work was confided almost exclusively to the Missionary Institutes, who took responsibility for large areas everseas. The

missionaries who worked in these countries were often nationals of the Colonial powers and constituted large blocs of similar outlook and philosophy. Today these Institutes are adjusting themselves to new missionary situations... Recent developments we have seen: internationality, inter-society groupings, smaller mobile groups, are all expressions of the new concept of Universal Mission".

SO NOW, EVERYTHING IS MISSION?

Yes – Yes indeed. The Mission of the Church is carried out by means of that activity through which, in obedience to Christ's command and moved by the grace and love of the Holy Spirit, the Church makes itself fully present to all men and peoples in order to lead them to the faith, freedom and peace of Christ by the example of its life and teaching, by the sacraments and other means of grace (Ad Gentes, 5).

But – "Within this Universal Mission Spiritans have a special role to play, which must be in keeping with our identity and charism. Any and every kind of missionary work is not necessary ours" (English Chapter).

"While it is of primary importance to remember that the missionary service of the Congregation is part of the universal mission of the Church today", "we must not forget that we are a Fraternal Community which by its vocation is dedicated especially to the service of those individuals and peoples whose needs are greatest, who are most neglected, those who have not yet heard or have only scarcely heard the gospel message" (cf. D. A. 3, 4).

WHAT IS MISSION TODAY FOR SPIRITANS?

"Spiritans have always been ready for tasks for which the Church lacks apostolic workers. We must return to our Spiritan sources and become aware of our common responsibility. This will help us both to be faithful to our obligations to the local churches and to answer new missionary calls" (French Chapter).

The Local Churches

Today local churches are flourishing in many territories and some of these churches are themselves becoming missionary. The time is fast approaching when it can be said of some of them that they are "sufficiently provided with a hierarchy of their own which is joined to a faithful people and adequately fitted out with requisites for living a full Christian life" (Ad Centes 6) In these churches "we should

live in poverty and insecurity with the poor". "We should give clear testimony to the life we profess as religious", and "we should help to make the local churches become more missionary". To these churches "Spiritans will accept to be called and to be sent, for concrete and determinate tasks, chosen in dialogue with the local church and in line both with the priorities of the local church and our own vocation" (French Chapter).

New Missionary works for Spiritans

Besides the need to make the local churches self-sufficient, the French Chapter enumerates urgent missionary needs in line with the Spiritan vocation: situations of oppression and injustice among the poor, exchange between churches, dialogue with other religions, the needs of youth and work among the emigrants. "Works of missionary animation and works for deprived people, especially those from the Third World living in Britain, are clearly in keeping with our Spiritan vocation... The Church's new concept of Mission offers scope for the Congregation to provide congenial mission work for sick or older confreres... This can be done in the Home Province or in other suitable Province or Districts" (English Chapter).

"In view of the enlarged concept of the Mission of the Congregation... it is likely that Spiritans will now take on new works and new ministries... We have many possibilities to examine among the ministries to the aged, sick, youth (Black and Mexican Americans) along with many others" (Chapter of U.S. West).

"Mission today requires that we pay particular attention to missionary tasks within the young churches: service, conscientization and first evangelization. However, there are missionary tasks in the old churches also, and missionary situations exist within our own country as well as outside" (Dutch Chapter).

"Ours is a missionary society: every Spiritan should be ready to go wherever he is sent in a missionary situation whether it be in or outside his own country" (Nigerian Chapter).

'Foreign and Distant Missions'

"We must not forget, however, that our Congregation is a fraternal community which by its vocation is dedicated especially... to those who have not yet heard or have only scarcely heard the gospel message" (D.A. 3)

While the French Chapter agreed that there were missionary situations in France, it retained the Congregation's traditional preference for what we used to call "the Foreign Missions" In their 'message to the Confreres' the

Capitulants say "There are missionary situations in France; we remain faithfull to our apostolate in far-off lands, and in spite of our limited recourses we turn our attention to new and urgent tasks". One hears the echo of Libermann's *Provisional Rule:* "The Congregation is destined for foreign and distant missions".

On the eve of Pentecost the Enlarged Council approved three mission priorities: in Angola, teams for the training of catechists, for On-Going Formation, for Communications and for Youth work; in Paraguay, for the work of liberation and conscientization; and in Pakistan for a work of First Evangelization. These priorities greatly influenced the discussions of the French Chapter. "From the very beginning we found ourselves carried along by it. Some found the new ideas disquieting, but all saw it as an act of faith and hope: it has deeply influenced our thought, it has determined the directions of the Chapter" (Message of the French Capitulants).

To answer these new calls, the Congregation needs the qualities of *mobility*, *internationality* and *universality*.

If we are to respond to the new missionary calls, we require "the principle of *mobility*, whereby our members are always ready to put themselves at the service of the Church wherever there is need: this will lead to the gradual disappearance of defined missionary districts and to the development of smaller groups "(English Chapter).

"The demands of the new missionary situations require the progressive reduction of the large national blocs and the creating of a new kind of relationship between the Generalate and the Provinces, Groups and Districts" (English Chapter). As a practical means towards internationality, the French Province expects every confrere who can to become bilingual. It suggests also that confreres could go to other Provinces to follow Renewal Courses.

To achieve universality "we must break down the frontiers of language, race and culture. To do this, we must accept the calls from nations and peoples other than those with whom we are at present working" (French Chapter).

NEW MISSIONS AND YOUNG SPIRITANS

It is not an easy thing for a young man to be sent on his first appointment to a mission where the next youngest confrere is fifteen years older than he is. This perhaps was one of the reasons why the Major Superiors accepted so readily the new missionary priorities. After the Chapter, the Principal Superior of Yaoundé commented in the District's Newsletter: "The young people want to serve the universal mission of the Church, which is not quite the same thing as unconditional loyalty to our traditional missions... They know their numbers are too small to fill the vacancies and they don't want to spend the rest of their lives filling gaps... They are attracted more by new missionary situations than by old. They are much more convinced than their elders that mission is 'witness', 'living like a Christian', 'sharing' and not just works, buildings and structures'.

POWER TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE

The Chapters of 1976 made divers changes in the manner of government of Provinces and Districts: we will mention some of them in the Newsletter. Here we wish to mention only one matter, which may be of special interest to Provinces who want to be rejuvenated. ensure that the younger Spiritans have a greater say in future Chapters the French Chapter, like the Canadian Chapter last year, made special arrangements to ensure stronger representation for youth. All young Spiritans in the Province, whether professed or still in prenovitiate studies or who are in the first three years of their first appointment, whether they are working in Province or District, are to form one electoral group the representation of which will be decided by the Provincial Council. For the rest of the Province, voters are to be divided into groups according to age, with a higher representation for the younger groups, and a lower representation for the older groups.

INITIAL FORMATION

Initial formation received special treatment in the Chapters of Nigeria, England, U.S.A. West and Ireland. The Nigerian Chapter was interested in defining the purpose and manner of novitiate training: its end-purpose should be to achieve a sense of responsibility, initiative, self-knowledge and maturity at all levels and in all aspects. The attitude of the novice-master should be one of openness, trust and toleration. curriculum of the novitiate should be one of openness, trust and toleration. The curriculum of the novitiate should include study in interpersonal relationships. The English Chapter stressed the importance of spiritual direction in the senior scholasticate. If necessary it should be provided for by regular visits from external spiritual directors. A cordial relationship between the community of the Scholasticate and the other communities in the Province

should be encouraged by regular visits and other contacts.

The Irish Chapter thought that "some values, traditional in the Church and the Congregation, need to be emphasised. Seminary training requires favourable conditions for community living and for the silence necessary for prayer and study". It also recommended "the development of steady habits of intellectual work, reading, prayer and study". "In the matter of commitment, perhaps too much attention is paid to the natural and the psychological and not enough to the supernatural and to Providence".

AWAKENING AND FOSTERING VOCATIONS

One of the signs of hope and optimism in the Congregation these days is the renewal of interest and enthusiasm for the work of awakening and fostering vocations to the Congregation. The Dutch Chapter made an appeal for new open communities which would be a source of inspiration for young people and which would attract then to a missionary vocation. The French Chapter asked that Apostolic schools and residences should provide a favourable milieu to those whom the Lord was calling to make a permanent or temporary engagement in the interest of the Third World and the Mission. In a comment in the Yaoundé C.S.Sp Newsletter, Père Michel remarks that the Province is accepting missionary works in France and putting young men into them so as to attract young men looking for missionary work.

The English Chapter voted for the setting up of a vocation team: "we must hope that in this respect above all, the missionary spirit and work of the Province will be revitalised While stress will continue to be laid on our traditional missionary work abroad, all must take care to present the image of a religious family eager to work anywhere the needs are greatest".

The Irish Chapter asks for "a team to preach retreats in schools since these have always been a great source of vocations". Five pages of the U.S. West Chapter document are devoted to Vocations, a work to which the Province gives top priority. The confreres may say a mass every month for vocations and should preach on Spiritan vocations at least once a year Testimony of life is stressed: "Woe to us if we turn our people, and especially our youth, away from Christ". As well as full-time vocation director, parish directors of vocations should be appointed and vocation clubs should be revived. Today vocations are more numerous

in small towns than in the cities. "We are desperate men, remember, at this stage in our recruitment: all other plans are of no avail if we fail to keep alive". The Chapter also approved the foundation of a hostel for black Spiritan vocations for boys in the last two years of High School USA West is a Province with a total of 81 members, but among them are 10 professed scholastics and eight students in Philosophy.

INSERVICE TRAINING AND RENEWAL COURSES

The French Chapter made a distinction between Renewal Courses (Recyclage) and In-Service Training which seems useful. A Renewal Course is a period devoted to theological up-dating and also to theological renewal. It requires that a man leave his habitual environment of life and work and devote himself to Renewal for three months or so. The word in French: Recyclage with its implications, say, of retreading tyres, stresses more up-dating in theology than spiritual renewal, though the balance of the two may vary. Some men may be continually living a life of sanctity, but may be helped by an updating in theology, others may be very well up-dated in theology but may need spiritual renewal, others again, and perhaps the great majority, may profit greatly both by theological up-dating and by spiritual renewal.

The Irish Chapter document devotes its first chapter to 'Spiritual Renewal'. The section is mainly concerned with the reluctance some people have in following Renewal Courses. A lot of men lack motivation: they are afraid that the convictions of a lifetime will be destroyed by shock-treatment administered by theologians.

The theologians are often insensitive and the 'students' are unprepared.

In-service training (Formation Continue) is done on the job, so to speak; in the work-community. While it may include theological reflection and a period of spiritual refreshment, more often than not it is pastoral in intent, at least in a pastoral context.

When the *Guidelines for Animation* speaks about Spiritual Renewal it is thinking not so much of theological updating as of renewal in prayer and renewal in the Spirit.

Under the heading On-going Training the Irish Chapter advises men who did their theology before Vatican Two to absent themselves from their work for a while, to devote a period to study and to prayerful reflection on the official teaching of the Church and on modern theology.

Elsewhere the Irish Chapter puts the onus on Superiors to plan for their men to have sabbatical leave to follow these Renewal Courses and also asks the Superiors to organise in-service training in their communities.

PLANNING

Only one of the Chapters of 1976 mentioned planning: the Province of USA West. "without doubt", writes the Provincial, "the principal act of our Chapter was to establish a planning committes with a fulltime chairman... The chairman and his committee are to draw up a five-year plan for the Province. This will outline goals and objectives on all levels: administration, works, communities and individuals. Its purpose is to give a clear idea of the Province's priorities and the means available to attain them".

Address all communications to: Fr. H. Littner Information Services Congregazione dello Spirito Santo Clivo di Cinno, 195 - 00126 Rome, Italy

I/D 9

The Generalate Team

January 1977

Libermann - missionary

FOUNDER

"The extraordinary, though little known charismatic founder of the nineteenth century " This was how Fr Tillard O.P. described Libermann while listing him among the great and well known founders, Francis, Dominic and Ignatius Tillard was giving a conference in Rome last November He was emphasising the importance of distinguishing between the great founders whose spirit and aims should be faithfully accepted and retained", and the numerous men and women who initiated works or institutions that continued to exist after their death, but who could not be regarded as founders whose patrimony is of permanent value. As far as Libermann is concerned, there can be no doubt about his being the founder of an important missionary movement in the nineteenth century It is particularly as a missionary that Libermann has left a "patrimony", and inspired people with a "spirit and aims" that deserve to be preserved.

DIRECTOR

Many of us have come to know Libermann as a spiritual director. Many writers on Libermann's method of direction and on his spirituality may not have emphasised sufficiently the missionary dimension of the direction and spiri-Consequently, it has been concluded that, like many directors of the nineteenth century, Libermann's spirituality is individualistic and egocentric This may have been true early on, but once Libermann became aware of his mission and then became conscious of the suffering and the oppression the slaves were subjected to he directed many men and women to devote their lives to alleviate the suffering and remove the oppression Tisserant and Levavasseur were seminarians who needed help and direction. Libermann realised that a spirituality that did not take account of their interest in helping the poor in Haiti and Réunion would be harmful to them. The delicate de Regnier who died within two months of landing in Africa and the first of Libermann's followers to die, wrote: "If I had to begin over again I would do the same a thousand times I would not change my position for all the world can offer." This is an example of one who appreciated the direction Libermann gave to his life.

CONVERT

For twenty years Libermann lived in the Jewish ghetto of Saverne. There he experienced the mutual hatred of Jews and Christians, and the injustice his own people suffered at the hands of Christians. He left the ghetto and became a Christian. It was a difficult step to take, but the initiative had come from God and the result brought a deep and peaceful joy. Twelve years later he became aware of the condition of the slaves in the Colonies and of the inhuman exploitation of the people of Africa by some Christians. Once again he felt called to leave another type of ghetto and do something to help a people in need, a people who were despised and ill-treated by many. Once again Libermann is "converted." In many ways this conversion was as real as the first one, it was painful but rewarding as well. "I have left Rennes forever. This was utterly imprudent, sheer folly, according to those who judge in terms of this world. There my future was secure, I had enough to live on and even a certain prestige... Now I have nobody nor anything to support me. I do not know what will become of me... Don't be afraid, don't worry. I assure you that I am the happiest man in the world... I'm already in heaven while still on earth."

CHRIST'S MISSION

No sooner had Libermann left Rennes than he heard an objection from a priest who had

been a seminary director for eighteen years. "What a massacre you are committing, taking this young man from France and sending him to the blacks!" Libermann had to realise that it was not just himself, his mission or his spiritual life that was at stake, he was now directing people to a difficult mission. He replied to the objection with unusual irony. "So those who are good, generous and fervent should remain in France and only those who are good for nothing should be sent to these poor people who are in dire need... Our Lord has a much wider He came to save all. view of things. sacrificed himself for all, for the least as well as for the greatest. His priestly spirit, then, is one of salvation and reconciliation for the whole human race. Therefore, those who share in the fullness of the priesthood of their Master should extend their mercy through the whole world." Here we find the key to Libermann's mission. In Christ there are no outcasts. Christ died for all. Christians are to share in the mission of Christ by reconciling people in Christ.

The life of Christ is summed up in his sacrificial self-giving on the Cross. The sacrifice of Christ is a sacrifice of reconciliation. He gave himself that all may be one, that all may be children of their Common Father. The missionary shares in the priesthood of Christ. He is called to share in some way in the sacrifice of Christ for the reconciliation of people in Christ to God. Christ calls all into the one fold. "I am the door, anyone who enters through me will be saved." Libermann's comment on this: "The true pastors are at the same time pastors and sheep. Our Lord is the unique Pastor, and all the other pastors are his sheep... In working for the salvation of others they find that they are sheep, for if they carry out their pastoral work as they should they will find their lives, and in this pastoral work they have to be guided by the Supreme Pastor and be his sheep... Often one finds pastors who defend religion but with bitterness and harshness; often, it is their own passions they are defending... The Old Testament was a fold of external practices... in the new fold the Divine Pastor will reunite all His sheep to make of them one flock and to gather all into the one and only fold. In this the essential and only mark of the sheep will be in the souls. It will be a mark made by the Holy Spirit, uniting all in the one fold and making all docile and pliable under the same Pastor. There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. between the priests and the faithful, all are one in Christ, gathered together by the sacrifice of Christ into the one fold.

The reconciliation of people in Christ is what the mission of the Christian is all about. In

his time Libermann saw as the most horrible example of hatred, division, alienation and injustice the institution of slavery. This had accepted the exploitation of one group of people by another and in doing this seriously damaged both. The slaves were subjected to inhuman conditions, the masters corrupted by the injustice they inflicted and the contempt they felt for their fellow human beings. In such circumstances the task of the missionary was "to do everything in his power to build up between the blacks and the whites, between the rich and the poor, that Christian charity that brings all to regard themselves as brothers of Jesus Christ. He should then try to remove the indifference on the one side and hatred and jealousy on the other". This role of peacemaker did not mean that the missionary was a neutral by-stander, the defender of the status quo. "The black people have justice and religion on their side, justice because they are oppressed, religion because they are poor and weak and so they should have the support and the compassion of the representatives of Jesus Christ... What the white people mean by order is more or less a return to the status quo before emancipa-This refers to the conditions of the Colonies in 1850.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

"The job of the missionary, his principal duty is to promote not only the moral but also the intellectual and technical advancement of the people." The basic principle of Libermann for missionaries was that they were for the people, not the people for the missionaries. The Gospel must be good news. To tell a slave that his condition is the one meant by God is not good news for him, though neither is it particularly helpful to tell him that he is equal to his master. Something has to be done to promote the equality and destroy the divisions. "Develop the personalities of the people, allow what is good to grow, correct what is defective . . . inspire them with self-respect, get them to understand and feel that they are free, help them to realise the beauty of the freedom and the equality they share with all the children of God... When in a practical and experiential way they are convinced that they are in no way inferior to Europeans, then I think they will be all the more eager to work for the advancement of their own people".

The promotion of self-respect and human dignity is an essential part of the work of reconciliation. The missionary will be able to reach relatively few people, but these people

should be inspired to help their fellow countrymen and women. "The people should be educated in such a way that gradually they will have no further need of missionaries. If they are not educated in this way they will remain like infants." Libermann was convinced that the best way for the missionary to help the people was to live according to the Gospel of Christ. No matter what he did he should be always the minister of the Gospel, not the propagandist for any human philosophy or ideology. "If people have a low opinion of themselves, if they have no appreciation of the dignity and the destiny they are called to they cannot then be enthusiastic about what is really good. Their minds and wills must be strengthened and developed by the teaching of the faith concerning the origin and the end of man. They must be taught that God made all men equal, that he loves black and white, rich and poor... Philosophy and philanthropy will not change the hearts of people, only religion will do this." The Gospel should be good news.

HUMANISE AND CHRISTIANISE

"The priest is consecrated solely for the salvation of souis... Some want to form men before they form Christians, this is a grave error. Men are formed only by faith and the practice of Christianity." If certain Christian practices had become corrupted this did not mean that Christianity was to be rejected and a humanism adopted. Libermann's first mission was to the slaves. These were Christians in theory. The law in force in the French Colonies required the masters to see to it that the slaves were baptised and practiced their religion, that is, that they attended Mass on Sundays and Feast days. If this as what Christianity meant, then Libermann is for humanism. This form of Christian initiation for slaves was a mockery of the Christian Sacraments. For the priests in the colonies "to have abandoned the people to their terrible misery was unpardonable. The clergy allowed itself to be dominated by the masters... it succumbed to the prejudices of the whites against the blacks and adopted all their biases." There was much more to the building up of a Christian way of life than baptising. This was why Libermann emphasised the need for education, for human development so much, not as something incidental to the Gospel but as belonging to the essence of the Christian message.

Libermann carefully analysed many of the current prejudices against the slaves and Africans; lack of intelligence, immorality unreliability

laziness etc. He pointed out to Propaganda Fide in Rome and to the bishops in the Colonies that Christians had been guilty of making false and rash judgements on a people whose condition should inspire compassion and willingness to help rather than severe condemnations. It was sheer hypocrisy to condemn the vices of poor and suffering people when nothing was done to help them. Why should a slave not steal from his rich owner? How could people be accused of laziness if the fruits of their work served to enrich an oppressor? How can it be claimed that the people do not understand Christian teaching if no effort is made to present this teaching in a manner they can understand and if the teachers themselves do not live according to what they teach?

"It is extraordinary how Our Lord preferred the simple and docile people. Nicodemus was a good man, an observer of the law and awaited the redemption of Israel. The Samaritan woman was bad, she was a foreigner, she even belonged to a heretical sect. Yet Our Lord gave to this woman a more exact knowledge of his person that he gave to Nicodemus... Those who are bad because of ignorance and who have not got evil in their minds are very easy to convert, while those who are corrupt, full of malice and pride put obstacles in the way of faith entering their souls." Libermann would question much of what is regarded as virtue, culture, development and education. The missionary should not too easily accept common judgements on people or on things. Hatred for the rich is no more Christian than hatred for the poor, but often the rich and the learned can only be converted and saved by the poor. The rich and the educated are in a kind of slavery often and can only be emancipated by the authentic charity and humanity of ordinary simple people.

PLANNER

Libermann was never on the missions and perhaps this is why he is regarded more as a spiritual director than a missionary. He was a missionary strategist, however. He was convinced that little good could be done by the heedless messing about of individuals according to the whims of the moment. "We have already said, and we can't repeat this too often, that in order to succeed with the meagre resources we possess, it is certainly not enough to launch out at random with the general idea of converting the pagans. From the beginning we must have a more serious, more positive and more definite aim. To get any results, it is necessary from the beginning to establish the means that are

required to establish our holy religion firmly on the soil. For this we need a carefully prepared plan and a strong hierarchic organisation. To get lasting results... will require patience and perseverance. Without planning and organisation there is no order, without order there can be no perseverance and no success." He worked out a plan, he presented this plan to Propaganda and discussed it with his missionaries. It was a plan for his time and for the conditions of the missions of that time. It is not necessarily one that is suitable for conditions today. It does however, give an insight into the spirit and the aims of the founder.

The early missionaries in Africa were advised to educate leaders. They should promote education, agriculture and trades. Those who were instructed in the different branches of study should be instructed in the Christian religion in such a way that they would be anxious to use their training for the benefit Education should aim at bringing of others. unity and harmony to people and should carefully avoid building up different classes in society. It seems that Libermann wanted a seminary in Africa to produce leaders in every field and not just priests. From among a number of students in the schools he expected that different students would take on different careers, one career being the priesthood. Some of those who did not want to be priests might want to take part in the ministry of the Church and the Bishop should be allowed to confer Minor Orders on these to encourage them to serve others in a Christian manner. The missionaries should be open to new ways of preaching the Gospel and establishing the Church. Only time and experience could determine what was of value; without experience it would be imprudent to have too fixed a notion of what should be done.

THE SPIRIT AND AIMS

Vatican II wants religious to preserve and develop the spirit and aims of the founders. and cherish the patrimony they left to their followers. It is sometimes objected that in the case of Libermann this patrimony is not easy to get at. There is a certain amount of work done that makes it more accessible. But there is a way of getting an idea of the heritage left by Libermann. In the history of the expansion of Christianity the nineteenth century is regarded as "the great century". "In geographical extent, in movements issuing from it and in its effects upon the race in the nineteenth century. Christianity had a far larger place in human history than at any previous time." (Latourette) Libermann was one of the pioneers of the missionary movement in Africa during that century. It could be that in the history of the African missions one could get a clearer idea of the "spirit and aims" of our founder than in his writings.

In our own times we have seen a General Council of the Church at which African peoples were represented by their bishop for the first time in history. There is little doubt but that the representatives of the young Churches had an effect on the Council and still have a very definite role in the directions the post-Conciliar Church is taking. Many of these new Churches in some way can trace their origins back to In this way his "patrimony" is Libermann. there to be shared by the whole Church today. Taking part in the development of these young Churches, learning from them, being in sympathy with them, trying to understand their problems, appreciating their insights is in a real, though indirect way, to partake of the "patrimony" of Libermann and to accept and retain his spirit.

I/D 10

The Generalate Team

Easter 1977

VOCATIONS

Dear Confreres:

On the occasion of the 14th Worldwide Vocation Day on April 24th, we wish to draw your attention to this important question of priestly, religious and missionary vocations.

At the very beginning, we would like to emphasize some of the most important factors:

- the awakening and fostering of priestly, religious and missionary vocations has always been, and still is, one of the outstanding ways of contributing to the development of the Church. It has to be a priority for us;
- the formation of a committed and responsible laity "must in no way lessen the attention we give to priestly and religious vocations". This is the advice of SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar).

We should also like to stress our increasing difficulty in fulfilling requests for personnel in senior seminaries and consortia, as well as the requests of bishops for specialists in the "theological sciences" to guide those vocations which do not follow the classical pattern and to provide on-going formation and training for the laity.

All through this issue, we shall also share with you our optimism with respect to vocations. This may inspire us to re-double our efforts for the good of the Church.

THE GENERALATE TEAM

Let us Listen to the Churches:

• The new young Bishop of Reunion, Mgr. Aubry, formulates his pastoral plan in this way. "To

work, in the human setting which is ours, at the formation of a priestly people complemented by clearly understood vocations . . ." This directive, which is the inspiration of other Churches too, emphasizes the fact that we must think first of the vocation of the entire People of God, — all of them, working together in a diversity of vocations or ministries, are responsible for the service of the Gospel in the human setting. Priestly, religious or missionary vocations find their place within this vocation of the People of God.

- In our apostolate of forming a People of God which is priestly and ministerial, let us take to heart one of the concluding resolutions of SECAM in 1975: "In a general way, SECAM urges every ecclesial community to be always concerned with the inspiring and enlisting of 'animators' for the People of God. Under no circumstances can we permit a lapse of the attention we give to priestly and religious vocations."
- We know what great importance the young Churches now attach to the consecrated life.
 One significant fact: one of the two themes for M.A.C. (Meetings for African Collaboration, which gathers together delegates of the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar and of Superiors General) in May 1976 had to do with the consecrated life. The resulting document deals with the meaning of religious life, as well as with the concrete problems met with from day to day.
- It is matter for rejoicing when we hear about the awakening of the missionary vocation of the young Churches to go beyond the borders of their dioceses, countries, or even continents. There remains one question for these Churches: "We shall have to decide whether we are going to found our own missionary congregations or encourage the existing international congregations Western though they be to recruit Africain members for their ranks." (Bishop Sanga, SECAM 1975)

Reasons for Hope

Our hope does not only arise from the promising outlook in the formation of a committed and responsible laity, but also from an overview of the whole Church with respect to priestly, religious and missionary vocations:

- in the Third World there is an increase in vocations:
- in the West, in America, there are signs of an upswing in vocations;
- in the Congregation, and in other Institutes, there is a more decisive effort being made to seek vocations.

Let us simply list a few facts:

... in the Third World

"The Church outside Europe is gaining strength," according to Fr. Henry O.P., an expert on the Third World. This is seen to be so where vocations are concerned:

- from 1965 to 1975 the number of senior seminarians increased steadily from 5,212 to 9,774.
- AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa, an association of Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) notes in AMECEA-Documentation Service for July 1976 that from 1961 to 1976 the number of senior seminarians increased from 455 to 1,368.
- Bishop Okoye, C.S.Sp., who died just recently, was able to say: "In my Diocese of Enugu (Nigeria), I have 160 senior seminarians, and 600 vocations to the religious life 40 novices, 35 postulants and 525 aspirants for the young Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Love which I founded in 1969."

There have always existed paths which went parallel to the classic pattern. Nowadays, with more advanced formation for the laity, we find vocations among young people — or not so young — who sometimes cannot or will not enter upon the classic course of formation:

- in November 1976 a senior seminary opened in Maroua, Cameroons. It accepted 6 experienced catechists, from 23 to 32 years old, and will give them the formation which is appropriate to them.
- on the next page we present an experiment which is being made in Madagascar.

Paul VI's words: "Africans, be your own missionaries" are being translated into action more and more. For example:

- two Nigerian priests have gone to Sierra Leone. The Bishops of Nigeria have decided to establish a national missionary seminary. The missionaries trained there will work both inside and outside their country.
- Some priests of the Tanzanian clergy intend to offer themselves to the Church in Mozambique and in Angola.
- Notice also the notable role already being played by members of the Third World Churches in the Universal Mission by their participation in international Missionary Institutes.

... in Europe

Certainly, vocations have dropped. But, do we need the large numbers of former times, given the perspective provided by the ecclesiology of the People of God shouldering its responsibility?

We can point out signs of an upswing in vocations:

- the January 1977 bulletin of the Province of Ireland gives on page 4 a study of the vocation situation in the country in 1976. It states: "The increase in vocations was particularly noticeable in the case of diocesan clergy, but there was also a continuing upward trend for both brothers and sisters. Vocations to Religious remained stable."
- in France, the review Vocations gave over the entire January 1977 issue to the subject "Dare to Propose". It shows how the Church in France is trying to take the initiative again in seeking vocations. "The wave of pessimism and doubt regarding vocations seems to be dying out. New confidence is born. We shall have to work at propagating this outlook..., but already it is clear that the Lord and His Church are calling us to new hope..." (p. 27)

Following a Different Path (Madagascar)

Parallel with the young men preparing for the priesthood in the traditional seminaries, there are also in the dioceses of the North of Madagascar, especially in the Diocese of Diego-Suarez, young men between 18 and 25 years of age who would like to be priests but have not completed secondary school. It is neither possible nor desirable to send them to traditional seminaries. Father Laurent recently visited the Generalate and talked to us about this question.

"Since 1973, 'he said,' a certain number of factors has led us to take on more responsibility for the training of future priests.

"In 1973, Jerome told us of his desire to go on for the priesthood. He works in the bush with his family, as he had to leave school after two years of secondary education. Others have expressed the same desire since then. Just now, in 1977, we are in constant communication with a group of 8 young men who feel they may have a vocation.

"During these same years, taking as a basis the principles laid down by Bishop Tsiahoana for the diocesan synod, much study has been done concerning the bond between faith and life, the bond between Christian life and Malgache culture, paying attention to the different categories of persons needed in a Church where everybody carries his share of responsibility. It has been noticed that the country people and the working people in the towns form the majority in the Christian communities. Young people from these backgrounds express the desire to go on to the priestly ministry. The Bishop has stated his intention to accept them without requiring them to follow the traditional cycle of a complete classical course.

"In November 1975 we met, the Bishop and a few priests, to take stock of the situation. There are in the Diocese two categories of young men who want to be priests: those following the classic course of studies in the Junior Seminary or other academic institutions and those who are working and see no possibility of following the complete course of studies. The question of direction arises for both groups, but, for the second group, we shall have to work out a preparation for the study of theology.

"Questions and tentative answers:

"It has become clear to us that the direction of the future priests is no longer the work of a specialist. The whole missionary team is responsible for it. The young men who are trying to find their vocation have a close relationship with all the priests, sisters and lay leaders.

"These young men remain a part of their people of origin, of their family, of the youth, of the Christian community. Their formation is first of all the growing to maturity of the vocation which is common to all Christians along with the members of the human and Christian community to which they belong. This development takes place by their participating in the deliberations of the village youth groups, by their sharing ideas with other young people who also want to be priests, with priests, with the Bishop, with older boys in the Senior Seminary. Meetings of all the young people throughout

the diocese who are trying to work out their vocation are high points in this formation.

"For those who do not follow a complete course of studies, we also organize courses which enable them to reach about the level of the fourth year of secondary school. In addition, we have one morning a week when we give them a course of introduction to reading Sacred Scripture. These courses are also open to girls who have expressed a desire to enter religious life."

"The rest of their progress toward the priesthood is simple: they may be accepted by the Senior Seminary in Tananarive, or, for others, the Bishops of the apostolic area of North Madagascar plan to take care of their formation within the area.

"By way of conclusion, we would like to make the following remarks:

- we are convinced that there can be various roads leading to the priesthood;
- all our findings over the years lead us to pose the question of the continuity between formation of the laity and formation of priests.
 We find that we must make serious provision for the possibility of different categories of the People of God - especially the poorest and most deprived - having access to responsible roles in the Church;
- bringing the Churches to the level of maturity which will enable them to be self-sufficient has always been one of the objectives of missionary activity. Should it not be one of the priorities of the mission today to work especially for the formation of leaders: lay people, priests, religious?"

From Our Provinces and Districts

As we read the annual reports and the replies with respect to priorities, and as we make our visits, we are happy to note that vocations are becoming more and more a priority for the Provinces and Districts. Let us cite a few examples:

- "The urgency of vocations is self-evident.
 There is little value in any of our efforts
 towards our future if we do not have priests
 and brothers to carry on our work." (U.S. East)
- England affirms as a top priority "The reanimation of recruitment and vocations work".
 The Province has recalled five young confreres from the Districts to work at missionary animation.
- Portugal: "Our priority activities are: the house of formation, missionary animation and vocations."

- Belgium has opened a house in Namur for the formation of Spiritan vocations.
- The Provincial Team and Council in France want the year 1977 to be a year of reflection for each confrere on the acceptance and direction of vocations. The February meeting of superiors and community animators dealt with this theme.
- Zaire: "The priority has been and remains the formation of catechists and leaders; but the priority of priorities will be priestly, religious and missionary vocations. Every mission, every Father, must be active with a group of young people with this in mind and invest in it whatever is best in his personality and also part of his resources." (Fr. Hermans, Principal Superior)
- Kenya lists as top priority "Vocations both for the local Church and for the Congregation." (Fr. Cunningham)

The Young in Formation

- In March 1977 the total number of professed scholastics was 237 (in March 1976 it was 234). There must be added a certain number of scholastics not yet professed and the novices.
- The Spiritan Foundations are making progress:
 in Nigeria there are 49 scholastics, 13 no
 - vices, 17 postulants and 202 in the Junior Seminary;
 - the Eastern African Foundation has 10 theologians, 17 philosophers and 14 in a preparatory year;
 - in Angola we have 3 scholastics. There are several preparing for the novitiate next year and there are 80 junior seminarians;
 - the French-speaking African countries have decided to open a novitiate in Cameroons in September 1977. There should be 5 candidates;
 - in São Paulo, Brazil, there are 9 philosophers, 3 novices and 4 theologians.

In Conclusion

- As we listen to the Churches and our Provinces and Districts, it becomes clear that for each one of us there is the priority of priestly, religious and missionary vocations both for the churches and for the Congregation.
- Today all the Provinces are of one mind with respect to the need of further developing

- missionary animation and of directing it more pointedly towards missionary vocations. Let us outline some aspects of this animation:
- investment of personnel in this task pays off in the long run;
- the witness provided by the Mission in its recent developments, of the Mission which will continue always, seems of highest importance. There are risks to be taken, there will be more changes to make - that is inherent in the Mission itself. Faith in the Mission is able to take all that in stride and to put doubts to rest.
- it would be desirable to develop further the mutual help among Provinces; e.g. in a sharing of experiences. The Generalate Team can foster these exchanges;
- we count upon you too to help us by your research, — in the project already being undertaken in collaboration with our major superiors and with other institutes to pinpoint priority missionary situations both in places where we now work and elsewhere.
- On behalf of the mission in the Churches (young and old), let us take to heart the exhortation to devote our effort to the formation of leaders for the People of God and particularly to priestly, religious and missionary vocations. Let us remember most especially:
 - that the prompting and direction of vocations is everybody's task. We insist upon the importance of the way in which the young are received into the apostolic team:
 - in dioceses or countries where the number of local clergy is still small, priestly vocations become the top priority of our missionary activity;
 - the young Churches are awakening to their missionary responsibility, and are already looking beyond their own frontiers. They expect a contribution from us. Our international Congregation can serve as a channel for the development of their missionary vocation.

In conclusion, we would like to remind you once more of our lack of personnel for senior seminaries (Brazzaville, Missionary Institute London, our own Foundations, the French Seminary . . .), of our lack of specialists in the "theological sciences" for on-going formation and for the training of the laity, for the direction of vocations which do not follow the classic seminary pattern.

I/D 11

The Generalate Team

July 1977

New Paths for the Congregation?

"No need to recall the past, says the Lord no need to think of what was done before. See, I am doing a new deed,

even now it comes to light; can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the wilderness, paths in the wilds"

(Isaiah 43, 18-19)

On Pentecost Eve, 1976, more than a year ago now, the Enlarged Council voted unanimously to give its support to three new missionary priorities, Angola, Paraguay and Pakistan.

Why Angola, Paraguay and Pakistan? Why not the Adaman Islands, Peru and Papeete? Angola and Paraguay were Spiritan missions already, but are now in a state of emergency. In Pakistan there is a situation of first evangelization which had been brought to our attention by a local bishop. There were good reasons why these three missionary situations should have been chosen. But perhaps there was another reason why at this moment of history, a Congregation like ours should be thinking of making new missionary foundations. The enthusiasm with which the Enlarged Council accepted the suggestions seems to be the expression of a confused intuition that the time had come to venture into new missionary situations.

Life or death?

After all, is it not strange that the Enlarged Council should be thinking of making new foundations at a time when our numbers are fast dwindling, when there are so few young Spiritans and when we have still 42 missionary areas to staff? In 1968 we were over 5,000; today we are scarcely 4,000; in nine years' time we will be much smaller than we are today

Recent books and articles on the life-cycle of religious communities suggest that most religious communities which have been on a similar downward trend have ended at the bottom, by extinction. 64% of male religious orders founded before 1800 no longer exist. Only those communities which had in themselves an inward dynamism of renewal have succeeded in reversing the downward trend by a return to the first inspiration of their founders, by internal spiritual renewal, and by adaptation to changing conditions.

The "Works of the Congregation" and its Work

Active religious communities often run into trouble when works, originally undertaken as a clear expression of the primitive inspiration of their founders in a particular place and time, lose, because of sociological change, that clarity of purpose which was theirs when they were first undertaken. A community founded to buy back Christian slaves from Muslims finds itself in difficulty when there are no longer any Christian slaves to buy back. A community founded for the education of the poor reaches a crisis when population-change makes it impossible for the poor to frequent these schools.

As the years pass by, parishes founded to care for the emigrant poor find themselves caring for people who are neither emigrants nor poor.

In a sense, the very success of a community brings with it the danger of decay: it has worked so well for the poor in a particular area that the people there are no longer poor. The time comes when the "works" of the community are no longer in keeping with the Work of the community. The survival of the community will depend on its ability to reevaluate such works, to change their character if possible, and to undertake new works more in keeping with its primitive inspiration.

The Work of Spiritans

Our Congregation is a fraternal community, which by its vocation is dedicated especially to the service of those individuals and peoples whose needs are greatest, who are the most neglected (D.A. 3). If Spiritans are reasonably efficient people, the time will come when the people with whom they are working are no longer those who needs are greatest, who are the most neglected. Works which are today 'works of the Congregation' will cease to be in the care of Spiritans, and the Congregation will seek new missionary situations, more in keeping with the spirit of its founders. The time will come when those who have not heard or have only scarcely heard the gospel message (C.D.D. 1) will belong to local churches sufficiently provided with a hierarchy of their own, which is joined to a faithful people and endowed with the means adapted to the living of a full Christian life (Ad Gentes, 6).

The Evolution of Mission

The churches of Africa and Madagascar are at different stages of development. of them have emerged definitively from the 'missionary' epoch. Thus, the churches of Igboland (Nigeria) and Chaggaland (Tanzania) have only a minimal presence of expatriate missionaries, and are now themselves sending missionaries to other countries. Other churches. like those of Masailand and certain regions of Senegal and North Cameroun are still in the period of first evangelization. Many other churches are in an intermediary stage: they still need the presence of expatriate missionaries, but they are also very conscious of their need to escape from cultural tutelage and to become more indigenous. It is required of foreigners that they see mission not as 'domination' but as 'service'; that they 'diminish' so that others may 'increase'; that they have the disposition to receive as much as to give; that they feel themselves as 'strangers in their Father's house'; as brothers working with brothers; as co-workers with others and not only for others.

The duty of expatriate missionaries is then to hasten the end of the period of dependence, and to help to make these churches self sufficient and more missionary. There are often situations in these churches for which there is difficulty in finding apostolic workers; situations where the church is absent. Spiritans are required to work in the most needy and neglected situation, even it they must abandon works which are more

developed, and in which the cycle of Spiritan involvement has reached its end.

Missionary Work in the Provinces

We are inclined to pass over the fact that the missionary service of the Congregation is not confined to what we call our Districts and that about half our total membership is in fact working in the provinces. That part of the missionary work of the Congregation should be in Europe was already in the mind of Libermann even before the incorporation of the Immaculate Heart Congregation into the Congregation of the He wrote to Le Vavasseur in Holy Ghost. 1847 suggesting that the new society undertake work for sailors, soldiers, galley-slaves, prisoners and beggars (N.D. IX 288). When he was Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost he wrote to Dom Salier:

Our general aim is to preach the gospel to the poor. We consider the missions as our principal objective, and on the missions we have chosen the most miserable and neglected people. Divine Providence has sent us to the blacks in the colonies and in Africa: without doubt they are the most miserable and abandoned today. But we also want to work for the salvation of people in France, but always having the poor as our principal objective, without neglecting those who are not. We are thinking of preaching missions in rural parishes, and more especially, working with the working class in the towns, whose needs seem to us to be the greatest just now. We would go to work in dechristianized areas in some big city, and serve people who do not go to church and are therefore out of reach of the parochial clergy . . . I forgot to mention closed retreats. We would give retreats to priests; as regards retreats for laypeople we are neither for nor against: circumstances will decide (N.D. XIII 170-171).

Libermann's criterion of mission was never merely geographical: if he choose Africa and the colonies, it was because he saw there the people who *in his time* were the most neglected. His first priority was to preach the gospel to the poor.

Today, provinces and districts are evaluating their present works in a spirit of discernment, and are seeking God's guidance as to what missionary paths to take for the future. They can be guided in their search by the early traditions of the Congregation and by the gospel message.

A New Path in Mission: the Evangelization of the Tribal peoples of Pakistan

At a meeting of the Bishops' Conference of Pakistan, in March 1976, the evangelization of the tribal peoples was accepted as the concern and responsibility of the hierarchy. The Congregation was asked by Bishop Andreotti of Lyallpur to help in this work. On Pentecost Eve, 1976, the Enlarged Council accepted the work of evangelization of the tribal peoples as a missionary priority for the Congregation.

"Why Asia? The World of Asia is unknown to us"

In the time of Libermann, Africa was the unknown continent, unknown not merely to Spiritans, but to the whole Western world. Libermann was always ready to cross frontiers and to seek out unknown countries. Nor is the Indian sub-continent unknown to Spiritan history: for 25 years, from 1862 to 1887 Spiritans worked in the Prefecture Apostolic of Chandernagor; and in Pondichery from 1879 to 1887. Archbishop Le Roy, as a young Missionary, spent a year in Pondichery before he was appointed to Zanzibar, and Mgr Corbet who died as Vicar Apostolic of Diego-Suarez had been Prefect Apostolic of Pondichery from 1879 until 1887. Father Barthet, the Superior of Chandernagor, became Vicar Apostolic of Dakar.

Now is the acceptable time

When the Empire of India was partitioned in 1947, there were great movements of peoples, Muslims to Pakistan and Hindus to the new India. The tribal peoples, though of Hindu culture, remained behind in Sind Province. There are between half a million and 700,000 people in these groups, a population comparable to that of Gabon.

The religious background of these peoples is Hindu, with a varying admixture of traditional beliefs and practices. They have been isolated from the mainstream of Hinduism for thirty years now, and have remained culturally apart from the Muslim peoples amongst whom they live. The Christian missionaries believe that they are now open to evangelization: We are like a

wandering ship in the ocean and we want to find our home, said one of the tribal elders to Fr. Carney, O.P. But there is also a fear that this readiness for the gospel may not long continue and that the peoples will eventually become islamized. About 9 Catholic priests are working among the tribal peoples, including a young Punjabi Dominican. About 5,000 have been baptized, mainly among the Kholi group.

Some priorities in evangelization

What should be the missionary thrust of Spiritans in this new missionary situation? They should certainly work in concert with the Catholic and Protestant evangelists who are there, in a spirit of ecumenism.

- Evangelization will include liberation: the mission to preach the gospel demands today a wholehearted involvement in the integral liberation of man now, during his life on earth (Synod 1971: Justice in the World, ASS 1971, p. 932).
- Evangelization today aims at the building up of basic Christian communities and at the growth of ministries within these communities.
- Evangelization today aims at the incarnation of the gispel message in the local culture. Evangelists in Sind have to take account of the local milieu: the Hindu culture within which the peoples live, and the islamic culture of the millions of Muslims amongst which they live.
- Evangelization today takes place through dialogue, social exchange and fraternal help among churches, religions and cultural groups (G.A. 4). Both the Christian Punjabis and the tribal peoples tend to live in isolation from the rest of the people of Pakistan: the Christians in Christian villages or in Christian quarters in villages or towns; and the tribal peoples in their own villages or encampments. There is need for a new kind of dialogue with Islam at a personal or village level which will help to break down the psychological, social and cultural ghettos.

It is hoped to send a small team of Spiritans to work in Rahimyarkhan, in the diocese of Multan. The climate is difficult, the tour is for four years and the people, the Manwaris, are a poor and despised minority. But we think Libermann would have approved:

Renewal through Mission?

If as a group, as a community, as a Congregation we undertake new and difficult works for "the poor and most abandoned" our very acceptance of such works will demand our spiritual renewal, in faith, in poverty of spirit and in prayer. If a Spiritan undertakes to live in poverty among the poor he will either give up the work after a while or the work he does will make him more poor in spirit, more Christlike. If A Spiritan chooses a comfortable job for himself, he will become that much more fond of himself, more attached to money and its comforts. and what is true for the individual is also true for the Congregation. The work we do tends to make us what we are.

There is nothing more beautiful or elevated in this world than the apostolate; with all its favours and consolations the comtemplative life is much inferior to it, because it represents only a part of the life of Jesus. The apostolic life has within itself the perfection of the life of our Lord, on which it is modelled: more than any other form of life it makes us like Jesus. It requires an absolute and continual sacrifice of ourselves and is based on that perfect love which transforms us into Christ Jesus

(Règle Provisoire, p. 7).

The Mission is the End; the religious Life is a « conditio sine qua non »

Most Spiritans tend to be activists: pioneers, explorers, builders, evangelists. Our natural tastes do not lead us towards prayer. The Spiritans in the time of Libermann seem to have been men like ourselves:

These poor children (we would say, poor guys) left their native land to become missionaries, and they keep on saying, I am a missionary! In consequence and quite

unconsciously, they attach too little importance to the religious life and spend themselves on external things. These good confreres need to be told in good time that if the Mission is the end, the religious life is a conditio sine qua non which requires all their attention.

In the same letter, Libermann makes an evaluation of the first nine years' work in what was then a new missionary situation for Spiritans:

What strikes me most is that God gave us charge of this mission (of Guinea) and he gave us all an ardent desire to convert the country. Yet right in the middle of our progress he tripped us up by taking away all our best men... Among those who died there were eight or nine who would have made excellent superiors, even bishops... I have often thought that if God treated so so severely, he intended it as a merciful punishment for our sins. He must want to tell us that we will save men less by our zeal than by our holiness (N.D. XIII 351-356).

This is a lesson which Spiritans today need to take to heart when in the spirit of Libermann, they undertake new foundations.

If for us Spiritans, the Mission is the end, and the religious life (in Libermann's sense) is a conditio sine qua non, then one way to our renewal as a Congregation is by dedicating ourselves to those individuals and peoples whose needs are greatest today, and who are the most neglected today.

The other way to renewal as a Congregation (as conditio sine qua non to the first one) was emphasised by the Chapter of 1974 when it made the renewal of community life and of prayer life the priority of priorities. Spiritual renewal will help Spiritans to live as poor among the poor, while living among the poor will have a quasi-sacramental effect: it will help to bring about that which it signifies, and make Spiritans more poor in spirit, more Christ-like. We need spiritual renewal for our mission, and our mission requires spiritual renewal in the Congregation.

nformation—documentation

I/D 12

The Generalate Team

September 1977

A more international Congregation

During our visits, we members of the General Council have often been asked to define more clearly what we mean by *internationality*. The capitulants of the General Chapter of 1974 and the members of the Enlarged Council of 1976 were convinced of the need for a greater internationalization of the Congregation. But some Spiritans have doubts and reservations:

"Do you realize how difficult it is to live with foreigners? An international community would be the end of community life!"

"Are you aware of the tensions which exist in those missionary societies which have a policy of mixing nationalities at local community level?"

International teams: a Witness to Charity

Already in 1969, the General Chapter called for international teams to work in first evangelization situations. The reason given was that such teams are in a better position to bear witness to the universal character of the Church. The example they give of brotherhood is itself a revelation of God who is Love (C.D.D. 383). The more international the Congregation becomes, the more it will be possible for African, American, and European Spiritans to live and work together in apostolic teams. The Chapter of 1974 saw the necessity to respond to the special missionary needs of our times by making stronger the international character of our Institute. More internationality will help us to work for communion between peoples and for reconciliation amongst men (G.A. 25).

What does Internationality mean for us?

- It means friendship between Spiritans of different nationalities.
- It means that when Spiritans from another province or district visit ours, we go to a lot of trouble to make them feel welcome.
- It means learning the languages spoken by other Spiritans.
- It means Spiritans working together in international teams.
- It means provincials and principal superiors visiting neighbouring provinces and districts.
- It means breaking down barriers between province and province and district and district.
- It means Spiritan circumscriptions getting together for a common project, say a new Spiritan foundation.
- It means the co-responsibility of all the Spiritan circumscriptions for the common project of the Congregation, especially in personnel and financial aid.
- It means convincing yourself that your membership of the Congregation, is more fundamental than your membership of a particular province or district.

Internalionality should be the concern of every Spiritan!

A More International Congregation

This paper is an effort to explain, to the measure of our limited understanding, why we feel that a greater opening to internationality

is necessary for the Congregation if it is to adapt to changing times. We are at a moment of great change in the world, and therefore in Mission. The past we know; and we know enough of the present to guess what the future of Mission may be. It will certainly be very different from the missionary era which has recently ended; if only because the human situation has so greatly changed in the past twenty years.

The Holy Spirit has work for the Congregation to do; as a community no less than as individuals we should, in the words of the Venerable Libermann, allow God to act and be docile instruments in his hands. And we believe that in these days, the Holy Spirit is calling us to be less nationalistic and more international, however uncertain and tentative we may be about the detail of what we will become for the future. But for the future, we hope to be 'neither Jew nor Greek'.

A Glance at our History

During the period of colonialism the Congregation organized itself into provinces and districts in a way which paralleled the organization of the colonial powers and their colonies. Just as the European nations had colonies in Africa, our European provinces had districts. There was a lot to be said in those days, for sending French missionaries to work in French colonies, and Portugese missionaries to work in Portugese colonies. Libermann favoured an Irish Spiritan foundation at a time when Ireland was part of the united Kingdom; Irish missionaries might be more readily accepted in British colonies than missionaries of other nationalities.

The colonial period was the time of the 'lus Commissionis', when large areas of colonial countries were committed to the ecclesiastical care, not so much of bishops as of missionary congregations. It was a time when the traveller in Africa would find here a 'French' church, there a 'Dutch' church, somewhere else a 'German' church or an 'Irish' church. The young churches were not yet born. Unconsciously the foreign missionaries, living perforce in national and congregational blocs, had tended to impose the pattern of their churches of origin on the new Christian communities. Within the Congregation invisible frontiers grew up between each province-and-its-districts complex. most Spiritans, the Congregation meant 'our province'.

A New Challenge

The Coming of the Third Church

Until a short time ago it seemed that the Church was implanted only in the West, a western Church which sent its missionaries to its mission fields in Asia and Oceania, in America and Africa. Only quite recently, perhaps after the Synod on Evangelization (1974) was it brought home to Christians in the old churches that the churches in the third World had come of age: A man throws seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know... (Mk 4, 27). Today leadership in the universal Church is being shared more and more by the young and vigorous churches of Africa, Asia and South Never has the Church been more catholic, more geographically universal than it is today.

'A universal Church without boundaries or frontiers' (Ev. Nunt. 61)

Now that the young churches are established in many parts of the world, the leadership of the old missionary-sending churches has given way to an international communion of particular churches: sending and receiving are reciprocal within this communion in which the universal Church takes body and life. Just as the dependence of the former colonies on their rulers has given way to the relationships of equality of the former colonies with each other and with the former colonial powers, so the relationship of dependence of the young churches on their former 'sending' churches has given way to exchange and sharing between local churches: young churches with old, African churches with each other and with the churches of Asia and South America.

This ideal of the communion of local churches in brotherhood, co-responsibility, exchange and sharing has been part of the tradition of the Church since its beginning. Today modern means of communication have made it easy for 'old' and 'young' churches to work together and to help one another. Thus Cardinal Zoungrana can say on behalf of the bishops of Africa and Madagascar, we are aware that we have an original contribution to make to universal Christianity. We are aware that we have a responsibility towards those churches of ancient Christianity which evangelized us in the past (SECAM Symposium, 1975). The more the local churches work together, the more the members of the churches, old churches and young, will realize that all are equal and that all have the duty to contribute to the life and development of the Church, which is missionary by its very nature, and in which missionary situations can be found in every continent and perhaps in every country.

How the Congregation can meet the Challenge

The Young Churches

The young churches have moved from a unilateral dependence on certain older Western churches to share as equals in an interdependence of churches in which there are no national barriers. Many of these churches still require and continue to ask for the help of foreign missionaries. Missionaries are no longer 'sent' only; they are also 'invited' and 'welcomed' as auxiliaries to the local clergy. It is part of the missionary activity of the Congregation to aid the young churches to enable to reach a certain stability and firmness (C.D.D. 3).

Diversification

In certain young churches the presence of large groups of missionaries of the same Congregation and of the same nationality can be an obstacle to the realization of a truly local church (cf. G.A. 17). A diversification of expatriate personnel can lessen the weight of the original bloc and can facilitate the incarnation of Christianity in the local culture.

The faithful in many young churches have little knowledge of the various forms of the religious life which are part of the richness of the universal Church; we should do what we can to help the foundation of other religious orders and congregations in the territories where we work.

New Spiritan Foundations

An international Congregation like ours can, albeit in a small way, reflect something of the universality of the Church. Just as the universal Church is now as strongly represented in the Third World as it is in Europe, so the Congregation, however tardily, is beginning to take vigorous root in Africa and South America. Provinces have been founded in Nigeria, and now, very recently, in Angola. There are Spiritan foundations in Tanzania, Cameroun, Brazil and Puerto Rico.

The young churches are seeking to become more missionary. We can help them if in every place where we work, we welcome young people

who wish to join the Congregation. We should undertake their training, at least in the initial stages, within the territory of the local church. In each case our aim should be to found a province of the Congregation which will find its own way of life adapted to the local milieu and which will play its part in our common project.

Our Congregation has for its end the service of those individuals and peoples whose needs are greatest, who are the most neglected (G.A. 3). Spiritans seek to imitate Christ, who was sent by the Spirit to bring the good news to the poor. A Spiritan foundation will help to make the local church more missionary especially if it directs itself to the evangelization of those who are poor in a special sense, because they have not yet heard the good news of Christ. In Africa today there are millions people who are open to the gospel and who have not yet been evangelized.

International living: Respect for diversity

The Congregation itself is an international team. The Chapter of 1974 reacted against the tendency of the various provinces to turn in on themselves, each 'nation' on its own. It stressed that we have been gathered together by Christ into a Fraternal Community to live out and bring to realization our common project (G.A. 24). But the fraternal community to which we belong is made up of men who belong to different cultures, both in the West and in the Third World. Our unity will grow stronger, in the Congregation as in its local communities. to the measure in which we respect the diversity of the different cultures of our confreres. An international community should be a place in which each confrere can feel at home.

An International Congregation in a local Church

Every Spiritan religious circumscription belongs in a very real sense to the local church in which it is situated, whether the local church is the church-of-origin of its members or a church in which expatriate Spiritans are working with members of the indigenous clergy. But a province or district of the Congregation is not only a part of the local church. Our Congregation owes its existence to a special action of the Holy Spirit, who implants in the hearts of individuals a missionary vocation and at the same time raises up institutes in the Church who take on the duty of evangelization, which

pertains to the whole Church, and make it, as it were, their own special task (Ad Gentes 23). The place of an Institute within a local church is that which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the institute chooses for itself, first of all by the choice made by its founder and then by the choice constantly renewed by its members.

The presence of an international religious institute in a local church should bring to that church a quality of catholicism and universality which will help the local church to participate more fully in the values and riches of the universal Church.

The Congregation is more than a missionary seminary

A Spiritan's membership of the local church will be impoverished to the measure that he is not practically conscious of his membership of our fraternal community. A man is not a Spiritan merely because at some time in the past his initial training was under Spiritan auspices. The Congregation is an international religious family, a missionary community of which each Spiritan is a member, a community with a common spirituality, a common life and a common purpose. A Spiritan's study of the spiritual heritage of the Congregation and his sense of belonging to the Congregation will enrich both himself and the church in which he lives and works.

The missionary who says, I am happy in my work, but the missionary group I belong to has finished its task, has no more purpose, is lacking to that extent in faith and hope. The old style of mission is over: today the Congregation is seeking to find new ways, new paths; its success will depend on the faith and hope of its members, on their fidelity to the charism of their founders, and to use traditional vocabulary, on their spirit of prayer and apostolic zeal.

The Meeting of Young Spiritans

When this paper reaches you, the meeting of Young Spiritans in Burgos, Spain, will be over. Its purpose was to bring together young

Spiritans, those still in initial formation and those in the first years of ministry, to discuss the future of the Congregation. It was not intended to be a Chapter, but a meeting-place for young Spiritans, of different nationalities of whom there are now over 250 in initial formation alone. The Congregation is not putting up its shutters and preparing to switch of the lights. The old tree is putting out fresh green shoots; the old Congregation is being reborn.

The Congregation is like a great fire, which was blazing away in the forties and fifties, consuming the missionary fervour of those years. Today the fire is still alive, but there are big heaps of ashes covering the live coals. What we must do now is to rake away the ashes, bring the live coals together, and kindle the fire anew. Maybe that is what we really mean by internationality!

This is the background against which we we must project the idea of international teams. It is a certain shifting of responsibility which had become almost exclusively that of provinces towards their districts towards a responsibility shared by all the provinces and districts, co-ordinated by the Generalate; a collaboration which take the form of mutual sharing in personnel and in many other spheres as well.

Internationalization thus viewed is a practical consequence of the development of Mission. Even beyond that though, we may justly say that in this internationality we shall make ourself a much clearer sign of what Mission is about: bringing together, reconciling in Christ, breaking down walls. If in our missionary teams, we could reconcile what is so often in conflict and opposition at the level of relationship between nations—men of many different nations, from many parts of the world; what a sign we could be of the kingdom of God!

(Frans Timmermans: Letter on International Teams, April 1976)

I/D 13

The Generalate Team

October-November 1977

Young People: As in Libermann's Day

International Meeting of Young Spiritans in Spain (*)

(August 1977)

"It is only through young people that a community can thrive: the hope of the harvest is in the seed. It is there that a Society's spirit is formed . . ."

(Fr. Libermann to Mother Javouhey, March 9, 1845, N.D., VIII, p. 86)

"It is to you, the young confreres, that we look for a FRESH START in the Congregation's Mission. We also expect great AVAILABILITY in the finest tradition of the Spiritan family . . . You will have your chance to live according to the Spiritan charism. Your aspirations will be respected to the extent that today's changing Mission permits . . ." With these words Father GENERAL brought to a close the international

meeting of young Spiritans in Spain. He had been joined there by the General Assistants Fathers SOUCY and GROSS, as well as the Provincial of Spain and the Principal Superiors of Sierra Leone, Senegal and Central Brazil. All of them were struck by how closely the aspirations of the young confreres paralleled GUIDELINES FOR ANIMATION from 1974 and the spirit of the 1976 ENLARGED COUNCIL.

Much has been said about the "death and resurrection" test for religious institutes. At the meeting in Spain the young confreres presented their contribution and showed that the Congregation has clearly set out upon the path of resurrection today and for the future. We shall try to present here the essence of that contribution for the benefit of the whole Spiritan family.

Get Back to the Original Inspiration

"Poor among the poor"

The young confreres had the idea of celebrating their history together: both their personal history and that of the Institute with all its lumbering progress as well as its wealth of experience, all its convictions and its hopes. They put all this together, prayed and meditated over it, came to feel "at home" with it in what they called a PARABLE OF SHARING.

After the presentations by Provinces and Districts had provided a kind of refresher course in the whole reality which is the Congregation, the next step was a sharing of thoughts about four topics: MISSION, FORMATION, SPIRITAN LIFE, VOCATIONS AND MISSIONARY ANIMATION.

From so many different approaches, it was striking to see how the ideas converged. More and more, the direction was towards what is essential, towards the inspiration which gave us our beginning, towards Libermann himself: TO GO TO THE POOREST AND MOST ABANDONED.

There is really nothing surprising in this: it was a getting back to our beginning, to our youth. Libermann made his appeal to young men. What they heard, ringing down across the centuries, was Christ's invitation to evangelical poverty. Christ was poor himself and

^(*) From the 1st to the 15th of August 1977, 134 young Spiritans met at CASTRILLO DE LA VEGA (ARANDA) in Spain. They came from 30 different countries. (Cf. "Spiritan News", No. 8, August-September 1977).

came "to bring the good news to the poor". WE WANT TO BE POOR AMONG THE POOR: this was the essential message, the deepest aspiration, of the 134 young confreres in Aranda.

This is not an isolated cry coming from Aranda only. We hear it from other places in the Spiritan family. Just recently, the Province of United States East dedicated its Chapter to renewal and came up with similar expressions and seemed at the same time to "get its second wind".

The various appeals are so similar that they seem to us to represent a call of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who is urging us to take up resolutely the basic options of Libermann: FOR THE POOR in the footsteps of Christ. It is the Spirit who is turning us towards a re-appraisal which may be difficult, towards what was asked of us by the 1974 Chapter: "... that ... we take a critical look at our present commitments ..." (G.A., 13).

Community

Another current soon made itself felt in the meeting: TO LIVE IN COMMUNITY. The young confreres place much more emphasis upon life than upon works, upon WHAT WE ARE than upon WHAT WE DO. For them, as for Libermann who recommended it so strongly to his sons, living in community is a fundamental need in religious and missionary life. It is one of the characteristic values of Spiritans. "Nothing new in that", one might say. Perhaps! but the young confreres certainly do not imply exactly the same things as we used to when they use the expression TO LIVE IN COMMUNITY, — witness the following quotations:

A basic need:

"... our Spiritan charism is bound up with our work for the poorest; but no less essential is the fact that we work and live in community, which is a sharing at every level: material, spiritual and personal. The community is the source of our strength and our support. In missionary situations our community life can be looked upon as our first witness and our first proclamation of the Gospel . . ." (from the "Mission" group)

A major requirement for Mission:

"... in the Mission, we take as a priority the formation of our own Spiritan community, as a base of operation for our own growth, for our openness to other Christian communities and for the formation of new ones. Our purpose is evangelization and community is a means of achieving it ..."

(Preparatory meeting of young North American Spiritans In Montreal)

The center of our life:

"... since our charism is a special love for the most abandoned, our community must be marked by our genuine love for one another. This is ... the meaning of "Cor unum et anima una". Apostolic work neglins in the

community. Community life is the center of our Spiritan life: a true family life which fosters the development of every member, even the weak, the sick and the very old. The future will be realized in small communities, both in the Province and in the Mission . . ." ("Spiritan Life" group)

Do away with discrimination:

"... we must put an end to all discrimination between priests and non-priests. We should be able to find other labels, as they have in Spain. Are we not all brothers? Why do some Provinces still say: Congregation of Holy Ghost FATHERS?" ("Spiritan Life" group)

During formation:

"... the Gospel must be genuinely lived in the community (students and directors) so that we can all be sincere witnesses to the Mission we want to accomplish . . . Essential elements of community life are: prayer, work, openness to others and lack of affectation. ("Formation" group)

When young people knock at our door:

There were long discussions about what young people look for in a missionary congregation.

"... young people who aspire to missionary life strongly desire that community life be based upon prayer, openness, mutual help and good organization. This aspiration goes beyond the years of formation; it is an essential element of missionary life . . . All our communities should little by little become centers of missionary animation. In this way they will show how the Congregation can be a help and support for a lifetime commitment in a fraternal setting . . ." ("Vocations and Missionary Animation" group)

Our communities have no right to disappoint these hopes of the young confreres.

Mission Today

All the young Spiritans, whether in the Provinces or in the Districts, are talking about Mission. This represents a great hope for the Congregation, which, like all missionary institutes, finds it hard to renew itself, to arrive at the kind of missionary presence and activity which is suitable for our times, and to open up its horizons to the future. It can readily be seen that our recent Chapters, the 1976 Enlarged Council and the animation the Generalate is trying to provide are all reflected in the aspirations of the young Spiritans. If we curb those aspirations, we will cut off all chance of renewal.

In solidarity with the past:

A whole week given over to reports from the Provinces and Districts – listening to OUR history in three languages and coming from three continents – provided a look at our origins, our growth and our present situation. It forged stronger links with all those who went before us, links which motivate us to get beyond the limited vision of OUR Province with ITS commitments and ITS Districts.

The young American Spiritan who wrote the "Letter from Spain" (*) was right when he said: "... it was a gathering of Spiritans who happened to be young but who also had a real sense of belonging to the Congregation as a whole ... felt themselves rooted in a history and tradition ... discovered a solidarity among ourselves with the rest of the Congregation."

One event symbolized the bond between the young and their predecessors. During the meeting, we received news of the death of an English confrere, Father CULLEN, who had been a missionary in Nigeria and in Mauritius. That evening, at the Mass for Father, requests came in the various languages for our prayers for all the deceased of the Congregation. It was a moving experience; it put the spotlight upon the labors of all the older confreres over the years on many continents.

Attentive to the present:

Solidarity with our predecessors is a strength. Another strength is the inspiration we find in Claude POULLART DES PLACES, in Francis LIBERMANN, and also in other great Spiritan personalities, like Joseph SHANAHAN. Still, to live in the spirit of our tradition does not mean to reproduce yesterday's Mission today, but rather to be fully involved in today's Mission. The young confreres are strongly convinced of this, and they said so.

They said so in stressing their fundamental wish, which we mentioned above, TO LIVE POOR AMONG THE POOR, and IN COMMUNITY.

They said so in stressing another form of poverty, a more difficult one – that of accepting the TEMPORARY. They see in this a characteristic trait of the Spiritan type of evangelization:

"... From the very beginning of any work, our explicit intention is to make ourselves unnecessary ... Our purpose is to achieve a truly self-sufficient Church which can live without depending upon our continuing presence ... We seek ... to get ourselves free to move on to other places which have not yet heard the Good News." ("Mission" group)

In order to achieve that freedom, the type of commitment which joins Spiritan charism with loyalty to the Churches, "... we have to devote ourselves resolutely to recruiting and training lay people and to fostering vocations; that is, to the formation of the leaders who will make our presence unnecessary..."

A newer dimension: "... Mission seems to us to be essentially a call to live the universal dimension of the Church, to establish exchange between the churches, to foster dialogue with the non-Christian churches, particularly Islamism, to work towards inter-cultural understanding. In the case of Spiritans, this call has to be responded to in community and in the midst of the most neglected peoples. The Provinces have a role to play in this, by their missionary animation, by their challenge to the sister churches - our churches of origin, by their work among migrant workers and foreign students, by their study of the problems raised in the "North-South" confrontation . . . " ("Vocations and Missionary Animation" group)

If the purpose of our Mission is to be POOR AMONG THE POOR, our whole formation ought to be a preparation for it.

"... Mission is the most important current of force in our formation. By reason of our Spiritan charism, formation ought to include contact with the poor. This should have an influence upon the choice of location for houses of formation. This is a point which ought to be fully discussed by all concerned . . ." ("Formation" group)

The place and the role of Brothers (or Consecrated Laymen) in the Congregation received particular attention also. A special discussion group was set up for the purpose. Some experiments are going on in the Congregation, and the recent General Chapters insisted upon the need for progress in our thinking about Brothers. In a few months, an issue of I/D will attempt to shed some light upon this question.

Towards the Future

There are important moments in the life of the Spiritan family. The meeting in Spain was one of them. Getting beyond all sorts of frontiers, they broke down barriers, forged links, shared their hopes. They began as strangers, but managed to live together and achieve a deep understanding of one another.

Discovery of what we have in common

With a view to helping the Congregation become more international, the last issue of I/D insisted upon availability among Spiritans. The young confreres also see the need to be a part of the new and more universal direction the Congregation is taking. They have now had an experience of life in an international community, with all its joys, but also all its difficulties. That experience opens up more than ever the new path which Spiritans must follow.

- "... Where Mission is concerned, internationality seems to us to be the sign that the Church is truly universal. Let us open ourselves up to other cultures and get out of the isolation within each Province. Let us acquire the feeling that the Congregation is one family, that it too is universal." ("Formation" group)
- "... International teams seem to us to be a valuable means for us to get beyond our own culture and enter into genuine dialogue with others. Our Spanish meeting showed clearly that, by the very nature of our Congregation, we have extraordinary riches in the area of internationality which we have not yet really taken advantage of ... ("Mission" group)
- "... If we want to work in international teams in the Mission, we have to start during our formation to become acquainted with other cultures ..." ("Spiritan Life" group)

Presence of Africans and Brazilians

Unfortunately, the new Province of Angola could not send anybody to Spain. We did, however, have confreres from Brazil and confreres from Africa (Nigeria, East Africa, French-speaking Africa) who made a real contribution to the meeting. Their presence was a sign that the churches in Africa and Brazil take their missionary responsibility to heart. It was also a sign that the Congregation is diversifying and universalizing itself, getting beyond the limits of Europe and North America as the usual origins of its members so as to be better able to meet the new needs of today's and tomorrow's Mission.

"One heart and one soul"

None of the experiences of Aranda were as fine as the Eucharistic celebrations, both all together and in smaller groups. This sharing the same Word and the same Bread as brothers really brought us together "into one body". The diversity of languages and of backgrounds gave our prayer a universal character. Calling upon "the same Father, through the same Lord, in the same Spirit" united us into "one heart and one soul".

"We knew it was so, but now we have experience of the fact that it is Prayer and the Eucharist above all that can bring about the unity in our diversity."

Convinced that spiritual renewal is the source of all renewal, the young confreres exhort one another "to live in and to strengthen the more contemplative aspects of prayer by means of the PRACTICAL UNION which Libermann teaches us . . ." ("Spiritan Life" group)

Happy to be Spiritans

"... We are glad we came to Aranda. We are happy and proud to be Spiritans. We are also as aware of limits and difficulties as we are of our hopes. We have one raison d'être: there are still many POOR, there are still many people who do not know Jesus Christ. Like Libermann, we must allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. He will know how to show us the way . . ." (That is how the "Spiritan Life" group concluded its comments on the meeting.)

We of the General Administration rejoice in this spirit and these ideals manifested by our young Spiritans. We thank all those who, from a distance or on the spot, contributed to the meeting. Most especially we thank the young Spanish Province for "going all out" to provide such extraordinary hospitality. In response to a wish expressed at Aranda "that the young confreres might be able to make their contribution to the Enlarged Council in the role of observers", the General Council has decided to invite one or two to participate in the 1978 Enlarged Council.

"Unless the Grain of Wheat dies ... "

Outside the novitiate in Aranda, Spain, where the meeting of Young Spiritans was held last summer there is a dead tree, battered by the elements and burnt by fire. It holds out its two remaining branches in an attitude of supplication. When you look at it, it become the figure of Christ on the cross, a sign of hope, rising out of death.

The Fathers of the Church often loved to dwell on the image of the old tree which was the cause of Adam's fall. Its wood was fashioned to make the cross of Christ, which was erected on the old stump: a shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots: on him the spirit of Yahweh rests (Isaiah 11, 1).

Sometimes during the long winters of Europe, the ice and snow freezes the whole countryside in a death from which there seems to be no awakening: the cold nights and the short dark days stretch on endlessly. Then one day the sun returns, the thaw begins and the first crocuces force their way through the snow:

For see, winter is past . . . the flowers appear on the earth.

The season of glad songs has come, the cooing of the turtledove is heard in our land (Cant. 2, 13).

Today there are increasing signs that a new spring is beginning for the Congregation: in Aranda the young people of the old Congregation expressed their longing to return to the days when Israel was young, when the first Spiritans devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the service of the poor. And at the Enlarged Council of 1976, the elders turned their eyes towards new missionary paths: Your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams (Joel, 3, 1). But spring becomes possible only when winter has gone before, and dreams and visions are false and harmful if we are not prepared to pay the price to make them real. If the tree is to bear fruit is has to submit to a crue! pruning; the seed has to die before

One morning, when the young Francis was hearing mass in the little chapel of the Portiuncula, he was struck by the words of the day's gospel. At the end of mass he asked the priest for an explanation.

Then Francis heard that the disciples of Christ must possess neither gold nor silver nor money, nor carry wallet nor purse nor a staff for the road, nor must they have footwear nor two tunics, but preach only the kingdom of God and repentance. He was instantly gripped with divine fervour and said, 'this is what I want, this is what I ask, this is what I want to do with all my heart'. He threw away the few things he still possessed and with great fervour of spirit and joy in his soul, he began to preach penance to all with simple words (Life: Celano).

the harvest is possible; we must lose our life for the sake of Christ before we can save it. Before the Congregation can be renewed it must die first. As Bonhoeffer wrote, there is no such thing as cheap grace.

Now is 'the Time' of Salvation.

Every Christian man, every Christian community, - and so also the Congregation - is constantly being invited by Christ to sell what it has and give to the poor; to live in faith; to fill up what is wanting in itself of the sufferings of Christ Jesus. There comes a time in the life of a Christian when the hand of God intervenes and strips him of his interior or exterior possessions, and he responds in a spirit of poverty and humility, in faith and hope This is a moment of redemptive and jov. suffering, when Christ helps the Christian to die to himself. It is God's moment, the kairos, the tempus acceptabile. God however, does not save men merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people (Lumen Cent., 9). He acts within a

Christian community as well as with individuals. It does seem that such a moment of grace and salvation has come for the Congregation.

"'The time' has come: you must wake up now: our salvation is even nearer than it was when we were first converted. The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon" (Rom. 13, 11).

Christ often warns us to be vigilant, to be watchful. Faith has eyes, but we often keep the eyes of our faith closed, and so we fail to recognise God when he is very near us. The apostles slept during Christ's agony. When

things happened just as Christ said they would, when he was arrested and crucified, the disciples did not see his death with the eyes of faith. The Christian community fell into a state of panic and lost hope. When the two disciples met the stranger on the road to Emmaus they told him that they had hoped Jesus would be the one to set Israel free. Jesus reproved them for their blindness and he explained how the scriptures had ordained that the Christ was to suffer before he could enter into his glory (cf. Lk 24, 13-35).

The Congregation is suffering.

"If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it" (I Cor., 12, 26).

If now is "the favourable time" have we eyes with which to see?

Empty Buildings.

The Congregation seems to be going through a period of crisis, and it is important for us to see this crisis as a period of salvific suffering, as a period when God calls us as a community to metanoia, and to renewal.

In our older provinces great buildings stand empty, which only a few short years ago were full of life and activity. We can explain the fall in vocations by talking of sociological change, of the effects of an affluent society, of the change in the image of the missionary, and the explanations are true enough as far as they go. Christ's appeal to his followers, however, is on a different plane: they are called upon to sell what they have and give to the poor and to follow him. One of the apostles was a tax- collector and others were boat-owners, but they were attracted by Jesus and they very gladly left everything behind them. When two of John's disciples asked Jesus where he lived, he replied, come and see: so they went and saw where he lived and stayed with him the rest of the day (Jn., 1, 39). One of the things that attracted John's disciples to Jesus was that he was preaching the gospel to the poor. People were attracted to the first Christian communities by the witness they gave to the gospel teaching, to sharing, to community prayer and to the celebration of the Eucharist: They went as a body to the temple every day but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God . . . Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved (Acts 2, 46, 47). Spiritans should not blame themselves for the empty buildings but they should see this time of suffering as a call to poverty and to a more evangelical community life.

The 'Works of the Congregation'.

In the provinces many of the traditional works in which the Congregation has been engaged for many years are being put more and more into question. In some cases the very success of such works means that they are no longer clearly seen as expressions of the Congregation's commitment to the poor. As the responsibility of governments for social services increases and as the laity assume their rightful place in building the world in Christ, pressure grows for control of our schools and orphanages by lay people or by the government itself. The group of young Spiritans who feel attracted to such works is diminishing. As a result the average age of Spiritans engaged in these works is so high as to force us to consider, if not complete disengagement, then at least a drastic change in the form of our commitment to them. And such a prospect is causing sadness and pain to many confreres who, in self-sacrifice and obedience, have devoted most of their lives to these works. And yet, since the inevitable is a clear sign of God's will, should we not show our acceptance of his will by making the necessary plans and by putting them into effect?

In the missions: "... I must grow smaller". (Jn., 3, 30)

Certain aspects of our present missionary involvement in Africa resemble the situation of many of our traditional works in the old provinces. If in the provinces the cycle of our involvement in many works seems to be reaching an end, the same is true of our involvement in some of our oldest missions. In some Districts we seem to be approaching the last stages of implanting the church. It is indeed a joy for Spiritans to realize that they and their

predecessors in the Congregation have preached the word of God and brought forth churches. While many of these churches still need the help of foreign missionaries they must be allowed to become autonomous. It is required of foreigners that they 'diminish' so that others may 'increase'. Here again there is a clear evangelical call to humility and self-forgetfulness, where the painfulness of the adjustment required is commensurate with the need for it.

No longer a popular Hero.

The majority of Spiritans today are aged between 45 and 55 and have served or are still serving in Africa. On their first appointment they went out to a situation which was still colonial or had only just left the colonial period. In those not so far off days they were people of substance in the eyes of the world: people who had considerable influence and who were respected by everybody. The missionary was a big employer: those were the days when churches, schools and hospitals were being built everywhere. In his home country the missionary was a heroic figure: books were written and films were made about his exploits. Today he has little influence or patronage and if he is a foreigner his presence is more often tolerated than welcomed. The value of his contribution is often questioned in the press. Within the local church his presence is seen by some as more of a hindrance than a help. He is no longer a hero but has become in the eyes of some of his contemporaries a somewhat ridiculous figure: Here we are, fools for the sake of Christ . . . we have no power, but you are influential; you are celebrities, we are nobodies (1, Cor. 4, 10).

Expulsions from the Mission Fields.

In the last ten years hundreds of Spiritans have been expelled or forced to leave their missions in Haiti, Guinea, Nigeria and Angola. The shock of being up-rooted and the difficulties of starting a new life in unfamiliar surroundings can cause considerable strain on individuals. Their suffering affects not only the confreres concerned but also their province-of-origin and the whole Congregation. Nor can we put

aside the possibility of another wave of such expulsions.

Questioning of missionary motivation.

The whole destructive process seems to reach a climax when the very theological motivation of Mission is questioned: "Thus one frequently hears it said in various terms that to impose a truth, be it that of the Gospel, or to impose a way, be it that of salvation, cannot but be a violation of religious liberty. Besides, it is added, why proclaim the Gospel when the whole world is saved by uprightness of heart? We know likewise that the world and history are filled with the 'seeds of the Word': is it not therefore an illusion to claim to bring the gospel where it already exists in the seeds that the Lord himself has sown? (Evan. Nunt, 80). Many Spiritans have been disturbed and saddened by such questioning and are tempted to lose faith in their missionary vocation.

"The Hand of the Lord has touched me".

When we put these points together: — falling vocations, aging personnel, the questioning of our traditional works in the provinces, the expulsions, the attack on missionary motivation, the approaching end of a certain form of missionary commitment — they add up to a considerable amount of suffering for many confreres, so many that we can say the whole Congregation is suffering. But if we are suffering then God is purifying us: he is putting us to the test as he did his servant Job.

We active missionaries are tempted to see our work in terms of quantitative success, in the building of churches and schools and hospitals, in development schemes and adult education schemes, and we can go on for years without much increasing the interiority in our lives. But if God wants to make something of us he suddenly intervenes and strips us of everything we thought was ours. It is not a choice of whether to suffer or not: this he imposes on us and leaves us no choice. The choice we are given is that which was given to the two thieves on the cross: to turn to God in love or to refuse to do so.

For the Congregation . . . a new Exodus.

"If it dies, it yields a rich harvest" (Jn, 12, 24).

Should we not see it as a new exile? As the call to a new Exodus?

Before the Exile the people of God put too much trust in their institutions: the Land, the Temple, the Law, Israel itself. They offered sacrifices and holocausts in the Temple and

they regarded it as a place of safety. But God destroyed the Temple, stripped them of their lands and drove them into exile as slaves in Babylon.

During the long years of the Exile God schooled the people of Israel in Jetachment

and spiritual poverty and brought them back to the fervour they had when Israel was young:

I will woo her, I will go with her into the desert and speak to her heart . . .

There she will respond to me as she did when she was young

as she did when she came out of the land of Egypt (Hosea, 2, 16-17).

They returned to Jerusalem with a more purified religion than before. They has lost much of their chauvunism and had a greater understanding of the universality of salvation. The missionary element was much stronger: Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles and the new covenant was to be an interior law written on men's hearts.

God has stripped us of our possessions, he has expelled us from many of the countries we held most dear. Our present *impasse* is like a desert in which God is speaking to us and he wishes us to answer with the missionary fervour which the Congregation possessed in its youth.

"The Poor and most abandoned".

One thing we can be sure of, God wants us for the future to devote ourselves more wholeheartedly to the service of the poor. Libermann's inspiration is part of the central message of the Gospel (cf. Lk. 4, 18). If we undertake new works for the poor we will have to renew ourselves in faith, in poverty of spirit and in prayer. As a man may be called by Christ to leave his boat and his nets behind, so a Congregation may be called to give up its oldest and dearest institutions.

"That each one be faithful..." (I Cor., 4, 2).

We were each of us called individually by God to serve him. But our response to this call did not end on the morning we first said, here I am, Lord (Cf. I Sam. 3, 1-21). The call continues to be made, and our lives should be a constant response, a constant readiness in God's serice. Obedience to God is our most fundamental motivation for being missionaries. If we preach the gospel we can claim no credit for it. We are only discharging a trust (cf. 1 Cor, 9, 17). Christ himself has commanded

us to preach the gospel and we cannot hope to gain salvation if through our laziness or fear or despair we fail to do so (cf. Ev. Nunt. 80).

A text in *Ad Gentes* insists on the faithfulness required of every missionary:

"When God calls a man must reply without taking counsel with flesh and blood (cf. Gal. 1, 16), and give himself fully to the work of the gospel. However such an answer can only be given with the encouragement and help of the Holy Spirit. The one who is sent enters upon the life and mission of him who emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave (Phil. 2, 7). Therefore he must be prepared to remain faithful to his vocation for life, to renounce himself and everything that up to this he possesses as his own and to make himself all things to all men (1. Cor. 9, 25). (Ad Gentes, 24).

Prayer: a means to faithfulness.

The missionary life as described in this passage in *Ad Gentes* is in itself a state of prayer, of which our personal and community prayer is only a more intense expression. Basically prayer is our obedience to God's Word, and his Word is always being spoken to us, even when it appears to be silent. Prayer is standing before God in poverty of spirit full of desire and listening attentively: "When you seek me you shall find me; if you search for me with all your heart I will let you find me (Jer. 29, 13). Prayer means being like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door when he comes and knocks (Cf. Lk., 12, 36).

We have to want God, to desire him; and our desire for God is something we have to work on, and we can't do this too easily driving landrovers and attending meetings. Being the sort of people we are, our cares and occupations cool our desire for God. We need to leave them at fixed times to exercise our desire: this we do to prevent what had begun to grow lukewarm from going quite cold; the remedy is to rouse it often into flame (Breviary, 29th Week of the Year: St. Augustine's letter to Proba). If we do this, then even when we are on the landrover we we will be able to live in 'practical union' with God.

Torn as we are, like all other apostles, between manifold tasks, problems and obligations, we cannot hope to escape in our apostolic life the tension between prayer and action which is inherent in the whole Christian life. But a Spiritan is called on to seek a solution on the lines of "practical union", a phrase which summarises the central thesis of Libermann's missionary spirituality, in its final form. This ideal may be expressed as a state of habitual openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, almost a natural movement of the heart in a man who has "achieved the sacrifice of himself to God so as to be free to devote himself to others" (N. & D. XIII, p. 708).

GENERAL CHAPTER 1968-1969, Directives and Decisions, 28.

nformation documentation

I/D 15

The Generalate Team

January 1978

With Libermann at the heart of our Spiritan vocation

"The Poor and Abandoned"

Some younger Spiritans are asking . . .

Two events of last summer challenged us particularly: the Provincial Chapter of United States East and the meeting of Young Spiritans in Spain. In both instances, as in the Chapters of the previous year, one master idea was strongly re-affirmed: the need to get back to our original inspiration, to the intuition born in the heart of Father Libermann: **THE POOR AND ABANDONED.**

Take these two brief quotations as examples:

"Some younger Spiritans are asking if there are not fresh challenges today; urgent needs comparable to those to which the Province responded in former times. Is there not today as clear a call for holiness, charity and sacrifice as in the past? To answer such questions, our first endeavor must be to discern where God is calling us, and how we can respond to the needs of the poor and abandoned in the modern world which are calling us to unity. With the faith of Abraham, and in the spirit of those who founded our Province we must be ready to move out from where we are to the land which the Lord will show us, to a new tomorrow, to new orientations indicated by the signs of the times and the call of the Holy Spirit.

"Today there are new and urgent cries from poor and abandoned peoples, challenging us more than ever before as a Province to unite, to cooperate and to respond to see what we can do together toward helping these people at home and abroad. Any new orientations should be dictated by the needs of those peoples who are critically disadvantaged economically, socially and religiously." ("Adopting a Vision for the Future", Provincial Chapter, U.S.A. East, June 1977).

"We suggest that every Province and District make a critical evaluation of all its works in the light of our special charism and disengage as soon as possible from those which are not truly for the benefit of those who are poorest, both materially and spiritually. Works which do not correspond to our end are a counterwitness to what the Congregation is supposed to be." (Meeting of Young Spiritans, Aranda, August 1977).

We hope that the Spiritan Studies Group will study in depth the implications of this intuition of LIBERMANN, because it is at the heart of our vocation as Spiritans. The rejuvenation of our Congregation will depend in great part upon our ability to grasp this "original youth of ours". As a start, we dedicate this issue to Our Venerable Founder*, hoping it will be helpful to have a few thoughts on the subject.

To understand Libermann's idea

The source of LIBERMANN's idea is to be found in his experience of God. He felt this experience deeply before he proposed it as a plan for his community.

We are not at first attracted by an institution or a congregation. We begin by liking a Person. A vocation is like that at first: a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Love for the Congregation comes later and is simply the sequel to a deeper love which came before. Only a personal experience of Christ within us and in the world can lead us to love the Congregation enough to place our life at its service. Without such a personal experience of the Lord deep within us it is not possible to understand LIBERMANN's idea, because we have to place ourselves at his vantage point in the faith in order to see what he saw.

A charism is also a vision based upon faith, a light from Cod. The danger is that we can

* Every year the February I/D has dealt with Libermann. We thought it better to publish it in January, in the hope that at least the majority of copies may reach their destination before February 2. (Editor's note)

encounter an already existing institution without ourselves going through the experience of love which gave birth to it. To enter the Congregation should mean first to enter the stream of love which caused it to flow forth as a congregation.

The poor people of God or the God of the poor

The heart of LIBERMANN's spiritual experience is his deep awareness of the transcendence of God: for him God is all.

At the novitiate in Rennes, Father MANGOT declared:

"We knew... that it was God who had taken possession of this servant and spoke to us by his mouth... We looked upon him as possessing the spirit of God to a very high degree." (N.D., I, pp. 531-533).

We read in Bishop GAY's recent book (1), the dialogue between Father CARBON and LIBERMANN when the former told him he had to leave the Seminary of St. Sulpice because of his sickness:

- "- My child, I'm afraid I have hurt you.
- Oh no, Father Superior, you have not hurt me at all.
 - How is that? Tell me how you feel.
- I am happy to be without any resources other than God alone."

This was the position LIBERMANN took up before God in the decisive moments of his life: his conversion, his baptism, his sickness, his missionary vocation, writing the rule, giving spiritual direction, advising his missionaries. For him, everything was based upon the most fundamental truth of faith: God is all.

It was against this background that he lived his life. That is why he arrived at decisions slowly: he had to consult God, to talk to Him. But once convinced that something was the "divine Will", he hesitated no longer. As a man of the Bible, formed by Sacred Scripture, LIBERMANN could only go forward in the presence of God, — otherwise he waited. He waited for a sign, even if it meant being patient for ten years (as he waited to be cured of his sickness), even if it meant living for six months in the attic at Vicolo del Pinacolo in Rome.

It is also against this background that the characteristic elements of his teaching become clear: fidelity to God who is all, importance of the action of the Holy Spirit. All his decisions, all his advice, all his plans were the fruit of that attitude and it is impossible to understand his writings without it.

"I hope that Our Lord will continue to give me the grace He has given me up to now... I shall live a life completely poor and employed only in His service; then I shall be richer than if I possessed the whole world and I defy the world to find a happier man than me..."

"My body, my soul, my being and my whole existence belong to God, and if I knew of any little streak in me that did not belong to Him, I would tear it out and trample it underfoot in the mud and dust. Whether I be a priest or not, whether I be a millionaire or a beggar, all that I am and all that I have belong to God and to nobody else but Him." (Lettres Spirituelles, I, 10).

To serve the poor I must first be poor myself

Ready to follow the slightest indication of God's will, LIBERMANN did not settle down anywhere: neither in Judaism, nor in the security of the Issy Seminary, nor in his function as novice master at Rennes, nor in the solitude in Rome which he enjoyed so much.

"I have left Rennes for good. This was a very imprudent - if not crazy - thing to do, according to all those who judge things as men of the world. My future there was assured . . . Now I don't have anybody . . . in whom I can place my confidence. I have nothing. I don't know what will become of me, how I shall keep alive and continue to exist. I shall lead the life of someone despised, forgotten, neglected, lost, - as far as the world reckons. I. shall be disapproved of by many of those who used to like me and respect me. I shall perhaps be thought of as ungrateful, proud, - be scorned or even persecuted . . . (But) don't be worried or afraid. Try to believe that I am the happiest man in the world because I have nothing but God . . . He will give me His strength and His love and that's all I need. All my hope is in Jesus and Mary." (Lettres Spirituelles, II, 300-302).

One situation followed another, and, each time, LIBERMANN disengaged himself and moved on. There was no lack of pretexts he could have taken advantage of to remain in one place or another, offering his services for various tasks which might have seemed within the scope of his health and his capacities. But for him the most important thing was always to be at God's disposal. When he took up a work, it was never considered definitive. He was not attached to Bourbon, or to Guinea, or to Madagascar. He was only attached to God. It was this kind of love that made him discover and understand the poorest and most abandoned there where they are.

Faithfulness to the original idea

From his first ministry - the formation of priests, to his last - the evangelization of the

⁽¹⁾ GAY, Mgr. Jean, Libermann, juif selon l'évangile. Beauchesne, 1977, P. 78. (Paraphrase of N.D., I, pp. 159,596).

Blacks, LIBERMANN saw his mission develop in terms of a constant criterion: the care of "neglected and abandoned" souls. He always understood this concern of his as a way of evangelizing, of proclaiming the Gospel. For him, his Congregation was by that very fact a missionary congregation. A year before his death, he wrote:

"To evangelize the poor: that is our general purpose. But, nevertheless, the missions are the principal object of our endeavors, and, in the missions, we have chosen the most miserable, the most abandoned souls. Divine Providence has made our work for us among the Blacks, both in Africa and in the Colonies. No one can deny that they are the peoples the most miserable and most abandoned up to this time. We would also like to work for the salvation of souls in France, but always having the poorest people as our principal objective, without, however, abandoning those who are not." (N.D., XIII, p. 170).

This fundamental mission will not be confused with any one or other of his geographical locations. Whether the signs of Providence have him working for the abandoned souls in Bourbon, or prompt him to go to the aid of the poorest people in Guinea, in Bordeaux, in Germany or in the rural areas of France, he has only one thing in mind: to fulfill what he saw as the *raison d'être* of his own life and of his society: the care of the most abandoned.

Of course, within this basic project, certain tasks quickly became priorities, — like the far-off missions. He even set it down in the 1840 Rule: "The Mission which Our Lord gives us now is that of the Blacks..." (1) but he does not a priori exclude any form of apostolate. He allowed some priests to work in a seminary which was in a state of urgency, and he did not do this grudgingly, in order to avoid greater evils or under pressure from some individuals' "personal projects". For him it was a case of service to the most abandoned, just like the foreign missions.

Thus no territory, no project, monopolized his efforts. The important thing for him was to feel that God was giving him a sign by means of the various situations of abandonment or of urgency. He dreamed of foundations and works almost everywhere.

The poor whom Libermann loved

If we take in their totality the writings he left us, it becomes clear that for LIBERMANN the expression "poor, abandoned, neglected souls" has a double connotation: **spiritual**, but also **material** poverty, abandonment, neglect. If a people which is poor in material goods lives in a Christian manner, it is not a part of the Congregation's project. Similary, if a people with is poor in spiritual goods has a

satisfactory life materially speaking, it does not form part of the Congregation's specific end either.

Concretely, for LIBERMANN the poorest, most abandoned, most despised were:

Surely, first of all, those who count for nothing humanly or religiously. He said of the slaves and of those recently liberated: "These people, so miserable in the supernatural order, are so also in the natural order... The Whites despise them so much that they treat them like animals. There is no class of people so badly treated and so despised." (N.D., III, p. 77).

Also **those who are despised** by reason of the judgments passed upon them, "Those whom people look upon as of inferior rank (Provisional Rule), those who are "treated as the outcasts of nature". (N.D., VI, p. 433).

Also those who are without hope, "abandoned and despised by everybody... the most unhappy and most neglected... both as to nature and as to grace, for this world and for the next, and without any hope of rescue." (N.D., VI, pp. 85-86).

Finally, those whom nobody bothers about, "Poor, despised people, whose needs are very great and who are the most neglected in the Church of God." (Provisional Rule, p. 24, art. V).

"At the very doorstep of Europe, there are millions of people bowed down by ignorance and misfortune, and nobody thinks of helping them out of it." (N.D., VIII, p. 223).

"We are only the rag-pickers of the Church, we take what the others don't want." (N.D., VII, p. 292).

Beyond history: a prophetic insight

The charism of a founder places him much less in the past than in the future: it has much more to do with a plan, a hope, than with a memory. It is by this prophetic gift that a founder remains alive among his sons. Without this plan for the future which they receive from him, the community would be incapable of understanding its own charism because it would have lost the drive that kept it going. Without that hope, it would be incapable of interpreting its past, because it would lack the prophetic spirit. It would be as if the People of God had lost the Promise! Similarly, the more LIBERMANN's charism is incarnate in us, the better we shall be able to take hold of the future and the greater will be our creativity.

"The base of our European works will be among the poorest classes who, in France, need help badly; e.g. sailors, soldiers, workmen in general, the still more miserable class: galley-slaves, prisoners, beggars... These works are not opposed to either the end or the spirit expressed in the Rule. It is true that we did not think of them at the very beginning, but that is not a proof that God does not want them. We could not have thought of them then.

God was leading us towards the work for the Blacks and nevertheless we felt the need to be more general, so much so that the Rule speaks in a general way of poor and abandoned souls." (N.D., IX, pp. 288-289).

We cannot have any basic criterion other than LIBERMANN's: it will always be in reference to the poorest and most abandoned that our choices must be made or re-evaluated. This requires that we be more attentive to situations than to countries, just as LIBERMANN was in his day.

We have to re-think his insight in today's context when we are being challenged by so many changes. There are still situations in which people are abandoned, neglected, but today's poor are not necessarily the same as the poor of LIBERMANN's time. Local Churches are developing, some of them are beginning to suffer. Could not "the poor" be Churches which are poor? Our manner of helping them and of being present to them must take this evolution into account.

There is no question of abandoning the Third World, – just the contrary! But the de-Christianizing of the West becomes more and more of a worry and areas of first evangelization call to us from just about everywhere in the world. The 1974 General Chapter gave a clear orientation of the Mission to "all the continents." (G.A., 2).

To which poor do we go?

Our priority is still the same: "those who have not yet heard, or have scarcely heard, the Message of Christ" (C.D.D., 1 and G.A., 3). In our Spiritan tradition these have always taken precedence. The frontiers have always been the choicest places for Spiritans.

We must also take new factors into account: the growing strength of the young Churches in Africa and Asia, the new outlook of the Church in Latin America, – these have brought about a considerable evolution in the Mission. We have come a long way since immense territories were confided to missionary Institutes for first evangelization. Mission is becoming more and more a matter of exchange, of mutual giving, of getting beyond ecclesial frontiers.

We shall always be available for urgent missionary situations, especially for those which find no other response in the Church. There are many of them in the missionary Church today. Reports from our circumscriptions stress, for example, that the urban ministry in large cities is becoming more and more a priority.

Since development is the new name for peace (Paul VI), we, as witness of Christ in the Mission, must today give greater attention to the strong current of individuals and peoples striving for liberation. "The mission of preaching the Gospel today requires a radical commitment to the integral liberation of man, as of now, in the very reality of his existence in the world." (1971 Synod; also G.A., 4). This duty falls upon us both "in the missions" and in our home countries, and it is an aspect of our missionary obligation.

We are also challenged by the phenomenon of the migration of peoples: in Europe and America there are many groups of people who came from elsewhere. We find on our doorstep, as immigrants, students and workers who used to be on the other side of the world. This new factor, in its very massiveness, makes the usual geographical criterion lose some of its absoluteness and justifies the extension of the idea of Mission as presented in the documents of the 1974 General Chapter.

The Congregation has every right today to recognize new commitments to the new "poorest and most abandoned" as coming within its specific end, and hence as fully Spiritan works. Perhaps our habits make it difficult for us to qualify these new works as "missionary", but all the same they take their place within our very best Spiritan traditions.

"... In all this variety, what should be the principal element of unity? The common trait of all Spiritans should be that they are concerned with, partial to, in solidarity with, the missionary commitments of the Congregation and its work for the poorest people. This is the very heart of our Spiritan vocation. This can be done in many ways. This concern, this pre-occupation, must be present regardless of our assignment in the Province. It should make itself evident, in one way or another, in our life-style and in the life-style of our communities. This should be the characteristic trait of our common spirit. It should carry over into our work. We should radiate around us the missionary spirit: awakening the consciousness of people to their responsibility towards the poor and the disinherited, for greater justice for all; and being attentive to the work of attracting missionary vocations." (Extracts from a Letter of Father Timmermans, Superior General, to the confreres in one of our Provinces.)

I/D 16

The Generalate Team

February-March 1978

Prayer - in these days

• "Prayer is something between God and myself: when you pray, go into your room and close the door . . ."

The Lord also said: "When two or three . . . "

• "Prayer is a common effort of Christians . . . and even of Spiritans: when you pray, say OUR Father."

But He also said: "Go into your room and close the door."

"We shall be judged by our love for our neighbor."

And not on our love for God? Can the two great commandments be separated?

• "I pray. If we all prayed more, everything would go better in the world and in the Congregation."

No doubt! But don't you also have work to do? a function? We are all dedicated to the active life, without exception.

 "I do my work. I take care of my parish. I look after the poor. I have no time for personal prayer."

And to you think that is normal? Is that the kind of "missionary" Libermann wanted?

• "If you have to be a 'guru', a master of prayer, in order to talk to one another about prayer, then let's just talk about politics, about sports, about finances, about the sins of the capitalist countries, about human rights, about the exploitation of poor countries, about multinationals . . ."

Don't forget that the Lord said: "You must do the one without omitting the other."

 "There goes the Generalate Team again, trying to teach us about prayer! I wonder if they pray, – and how well!"

It's a good question, and one we would like to try to answer. In order to talk about prayer without just repeating what so many have already said, we first have to think about it in the presence of God. We have to think about it TOGETHER, in an attitude of searching, in the light of the Scriptures.

The members of the General Council try to do this. The results are not always brilliant, but we are all more and more strongly convinced of the necessity of both personal prayer and community prayer.

"At every Chapter, as well as at the last Enlarged Council, we have talked about SPIRITUAL RENEWAL. I too believe that it is essential. But, for the most part, we have merely mentioned it and nothing more. Thus we remain at the starting-gate...

"I see very little "spiritual animation" going on, at least in our District. Could we not move on a little further, make some concrete proposals, think of a kind of spiritual animation which would be not just individual but collective and communitarian? If there is to be a great effort made towards renewal of the Congregation, if can only be successful if it goes hand in hand with a more intense prayer life." (A Principal Superior, November 1977)

Prayer at the Generalate

The confreres at the Generalate experience the same difficulties as all Spiritan communities which try to pray together, — with a few additional ones! In such an "international" setting, there are great divergences of mentality, of culture, of age . . . There are those who are more "individualistic" and those who are more "community-minded". There are "verticalists" and "horizontalists", "liturgists" and "paraliturgists" . . . One might say that there are enough difficulties in getting together for the common work of administration without adding those of praying together. Still, we do manage to recite the Office in common — in Italian; we concelebrate the Eucharist — in Italian — with homilies which are usually in French so that everybody can follow them.

What do visiting confreres think of community prayer at the Generalate? The majority say they like it. Some would wish to see happier faces. They may be right, but not every day is a "feast day", and we have visitors at the Generalate almost every day.

One venerable confrere even said:

"You don't pray at the Generalate."

"You've been here two days and you're sure of that! Really now . . . "

"I went to the chapel before Mass and saw only one or two making their meditation."

"It could be that there have been changes since you made your novitiate; it is no longer required that meditation be made in common."

An exercise in community discernment

Could it have been "ecumenism" that prompted us to ask Father Gonzales, a Jesuit, to tell us more about community discernment? Perhaps. though we knew beforehand that the Jesuit Father would tell us to pray, it was not a prayer experience we asked him for, but rather a better acquaintance with "discernment" which is his special field. The session was organized at the end of October by and for the General Council, but all members of the community were welcome to attend.

Father Gonzales set us the task of doing a practical exercise in discernment and left the choice of subject up to us. We agreed to treat the question: DO WE REALLY PRAY AT THE GENERALATE?

It is not easy to describe the procedure: the requirement that each one place himself in an attitude of neutrality, of indifference, so as not to decide upon the answer ahead of time, but to advance step by step.

After an hour of personal prayer and reflection, each one was asked to put in writing his answer to the first question: "What are the reasons which would lead you to say that this community does not pray?" At the appointed time, we came together and each one read out the reasons he had written down.

Real effort was made to give serious reasons, but the replies showed how difficult it was to give arguments proving that "we don't pray in this community". Some reasons given were: formalism in recitation or singing together, legalistic attitudes towards rubrics in the Eucharistic celebration, the danger of using this celebration as a proof that we get on well together and love one another, and other ways of acting which could leave some doubt as to the reality and the quality of charity involved . . .

The very difficulty we found in giving reasons for a possible conclusion that "we don't really pray here" possibly shows that we would not like to be thought of as people who don't really pray. After all, we do

believe in the importance of prayer!

A second question was asked: "What are the reasons which would justify saying that this is a community that prays?" Here again, the same procedure was followed: personal prayer and reflection, "positive indifference" - not seeking to impose an answer, but simply to express valid arguments.

It was characteristic of the reasons given that they dealt more with conduct than with the exercises of community prayer. Stress was justifiably placed upon devotedness to the common good, upon serious application to work, upon attention to others and especially to visitors, upon naturalness in fraternal relationships, and also upon joy. The effort everyone makes to pray together was mentioned, re-affirmed, but did not seem to be the principal motive. Still, the conclusion was clear: we are convinced that active faith, hope in the face of all circumstances, and true charity could not exist without real prayer such as we believe ours to be, even though "experts" could easily point out its defects.

A third step led us towards a purely "personal" response, - not yet a "community" one. After we had prayed and considered the reasons "pro" and contra", cacir one had to give HIS personal opinion. This time everybody had to be personally committed. The great majority of replies were affirmative. The others tended to be affirmative also but with reservations about the quality of our community prayer and the limited number of confreres taking part in the

The final step, that of a "community" reply, could not be completed because of circumstances (our own, as well as the fact that Father Gonzales had to leave for another commitment). However, we did draw some conclusions from what had already been said:

- the need to direct our offices in common more clearly towards a better praising of God, while taking account of different mentalities;

the need to draw upon recognized talents, in the line of leaders, singers, etc., for improving our common prayer;

the need for personal prayer and "practical union"; - the importance of community life as a preparation for prayer and as a continuation of prayer;

awareness that joy is a gift of the Spirit which He

gives as He sees fit . .

Given the real differences there are among the members of the community (and these have to be respected), it is not right to try too hard to create an atmosphere of joy which could well be quite artificial. Prayer pre-supposes a "waiting", a desire; and prayer should intensify that "waiting", that desire of the only true good.

Prayer and community life

Far be it from us to think that you can solve all the difficulties of community life by prayer alone without taking the trouble to face them directly. It is important, however, to look at those difficulties in a spirit of prayer, in the presence of God, and with real concern for the members of the community.

Community is not merely the place where "it is good to be together". It is also the abode of reconciliation and pardon. We can pray together better when we understand one another better. And if we do not understand one another, then reconciliation is all the more necessary so that we can pray. "When you are gathered together in my name, I am in the midst of you." True community life demands that we put into practice our faith, hope and charity. In this way it is both preparation for prayer and a continuation of prayer.

To insist upon prayer is not to deny the need for human means in the organization of community But a life which is well organized, humanly speaking, does not necessarily open onto a life of faith. Here again, we can "neither neglect the one, nor omit the other." If we wait until all the "human" conditions have been fulfilled before beginning to try to pray together, we shall run the risk of missing an essential element of our human needs: the spiritual element, the life of faith. We shall also run the risk of putting it off indefinitely "until later".

Prayer and apostolic activity

It does not require a long acquaintance with Libermann to realize that the missionaries he wanted to form had to be men of renouncement, of selfdenial, men who had agreed to follow Christ - with all that that entails - in order to establish the Kingdom of the Father under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For the apostolate among the poor, men are needed who have solidly established the Kingdom of God within themselves, men who strive for perfection with all their being. The perfection of the spiritual life, sanctification, goes hand in hand with the life of prayer.

Father Libermann had lived in a seminary, and then in a novitiate. No doubt he thought that his missionaries would be able to continue easily the practice of meditation which would lead them, in docility to the Holy Spirit, towards the highest degree of contemplation. But the letters he received from missionaries gave him to understand that life in the missions was very different from life in a seminary. Still, he seems never to have given up on the necessity of prayer for the missionary. He came to understand that the sanctification of the missionaries and the success of their apostolate had to come from what he called PRACTICAL UNION WITH GOD 1: men of action must sanctify themselves in and by their activity.

When we read certain pages of the "Instruction to missionaries" 2, we can see what great importance Libermann attached to practical union . . . exhorts, he begs, in very emotional terms:

"Ah, my very dear confreres, how urgent it is that you reach the holiness of the life of Our Lord! Have pity on those poor souls!" (Directoire Spirituel, p. 131).

He finds stronger words to qualify what prevents us from being united to God in our apostolic activity:

"Why and for how long will our base nature continue to be the inspiration of our actions?" (Ibid.), when practical union could set us free and give way to the life of Jesus Christ.

"Practical Union"

"The soul can be united to God in two ways: by practical union in the actions and habits of our life, and by comtemplative union or meditation." (Directoire Spirituel, p. 1).

There is a clear distinction between these two attitudes, but the result seems to be one and the same: UNION WITH GOD. Practical union comes about when we desire what God wants, not in a general way but in definite actions.

But Libermann remains a realist and does not hesitate to denounce:

"the illusions we have with regard to our intentions" (Directoire Spirituel, p. 122).

He distrusts "figments of the imagination", false ideas which we think are supernatural.

Nowadays we often sing:

"Grant to us. O Lord, a heart renewed . . . "

but, when it comes to definite choices of action, are we ready to act according to this "heart renewed"? There is a struggle between our selfishness and the calls of the Spirit of God; there is the paschal mystery of "death and resurrection". This heart of ours which does not want to die Libermann calls "the inclinations of nature"; similarly, for him, the "heart renewed" is "the grace of the Holy Spirit living in us". Ancient wisdom had already said it: "Qualiscumque quisquis est talis finis ei videtur" ("Everyone seeks the good which corresponds to what he is; it is our entire being which conditions our intentions"). Everything opposed to life according to the Spirit must die in the face of the practical choices presented us by action for the love of God, and of our neighbor. Certainly, it is not a bargain-rate holiness that Libermann proposes to us as practical union!

For he who accepts the death and the life involved in practical union will be willing to devote himself to real prayer. It is worth noting that Libermann recommends practical union "in the spirit of prayer."

It is good to have a clear view of the difficulties to be met with in living according to the Spirit. But it is more encouraging to look at the bright side. Libermann himself does not forget to do this, insisting as he does upon the availability so necessary for today's missionaries. He concludes (we are far removed from any "rose-water" type of piety! he himself used the image of fire):

"God will have to put burning torches into the hands of those whom He sends to set the fire . . . Why are there so few of these divine incendiaries? Because there are few saints, few souls united to God in the practical habits of their lives." (Directoire Spirituel, p. 130).

Spiritual renewal

If we dare to talk about prayer without being masters of prayer ourselves, it is because we believe that the members of the Congregation are quite willing to talk about it and to hear about it. The General Chapters, the Provincial and District Chapters recognize that spiritual renewal is a priority of action for Spiritans. We need to underline here the return to the intentions of the founders, to their spirituality, and at the same time maintain great freedom of choice as concerns the times of personal prayer and the forms of community prayer.

(Directoire Spintuel, 1910, pp. 5 ft.).

¹ Libermann's doctrine of PRACTICAL UNION can be found all through his letters, even the earliest ones, from 1836 on (cf. Lettres Spirituelles, I, p. 163). However, the texts in which it is most completely and most pointedly stated, notably in the "Instruction to missionaries", all date from 1851. The 1968-9 General Chapter (C.D.D., nos. 28-29) makes explicit mention of this teaching of Libermann and gives the necessary references.

2 "Instruction to missionaries" (Ecrits Spirituels, published in 1891, pp. 365 ff.) later became "Instruction on holiness"

Spiritual renewal is not just a matter of a few months or a year spent in a renewal program, even though such a program has been a new starting point for many. We wish to encourage them to continue. We must be always being converted, being renewed, if we are to answer today's calls, the call of the young Churches, the call of the laity – leaders and others –, the call of young people who hear the "Come! follow Me!" It will always be hard for us to talk about the requirements of the Christian life and the means for living it, if we do not have personal experience of them, an experience of which we can give witness.

Spiritual renewal and mutual assistance

There is an encouraging sign of spiritual renewal appearing in community life; an effort to renew a natural but deep life of real brotherliness. We were all trained to be greatly reserved about our relations with God, and we must, of course, be willing to respect what is most personal in our prayer. But our community discussions ought not always to pass over what is important for the life of all and for the life of each one. We ought to be able to speak about what we do personally to prepare ourselves to meet the Lord, to bring ourselves to live under the Spirit's influence in all our activities. Our help for one another should not cease to function in the area of the spiritual life, of our personal and community prayer.

Do we need to have recourse to a specialist in order to make a start? The little exercise we tried to describe above was helpful to us. In an international community like the Generalate it was probably necessary. Each community can ask itself what it needs to do, while always taking into account the capabilities of each of its members.

Renewal and the "devotions" of the Congregation

There are some "devotions" which form part of the tradition of the Congregation. We cannot ignore them. We ought to be proud of them. Wouldn't it be childish to throw everything out on the pretext that the word "devotions" is old-fashioned? Perhaps they have lost their appeal. But aren't we at fault for not having renewed them and made them accessible and adapted them to the people of today?

Even apart from us - let's admit it! - "devotion to the Holy Spirit" is being renewed. We can rejoice in this. If the renewal of the

Church is brought about by the Holy Spirit, might it not be the same for the Congregation "of the Holy Spirit"? . . .

. . . which is also the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Here again, it is surely not the devotion to the Mother of Jesus that is unsuitable for the people of our time, but rather the way in which it is presented. At his mother's request, Jesus changed water into wine, and there was joy at the wedding feast. Perhaps it is because she is not invited to our liturgical celebrations that a measure of joy is often lacking there. Might she not, by her presence, bring about the conversion of our hearts of stone? In her Magnificat she proclaims that "the Lord has looked upon his humble servant". As we seek to discover the designs of God for us, we will necessarily have to look upon her who is still the Mother of God and our Mother.

Prayer for the Congregation

We talk more and more about internationality. Prayer "for the Congregation" must accompany this movement towards more openness to one another. It has always been in the Spiritan tradition to pray for one another, to pray for the Superior General, to pray for our dead . . . These customs too need to be renewed and adapted to the style of our communities. It is our duty to exhort you to pray for the Congregation, its works, its members, and to assure you that the Eucharistic celebrations and the community prayers which you offer for the intentions of the Superior General are indeed prayers for the intentions of the Congregation.

With all our hearts we join our prayers to yours.

"In returning and rest . . . "

Is it too poetic to think of renewal in prayer as a return of Springtime? Our purpose in this issue of I/D has been to invite each confrere, each community, each Mission team to examine the place of prayer in their daily lives. It will be found that such an examination goes deep into the whole condition of our existence before God. It takes courage and great honesty. We may find things that have to be changed. The winter does not melt away easily. But the grace of God is the sunshine which can come in when we open ourselves to it.

"In returning and rest you shall be saved

"The Lord is waiting to be gracious to you. Blessed are they who are waiting for Him." (Isaiah 30 15, 18) I/D 17

The Generalate Team

May-June 1978

Life: our best witness

The time was early November last. The place was Assisi. The occasion, the Annual Retreat of the Generalate Team. Before setting out on our various visits to the Provinces and Districts we had considered it important to go aside and rest awhile with the Lord, not only for our own spiritual refreshment but that we might share together our common concern for our confreres and for the Renewal of the Congregation. Very quickly we became aware of our agreement on what we should put before our brethren for their consideration in the months and years ahead. Our reflections seemed to turn on four points which we are convinced are vitally important: a. SPIRITUAL RENEWAL, with particular reference to Prayer-Life; THE RELATIONSHIP of the individual member and the Congregation; d. VOCATIONS. We feel the urge to share our thoughts with you. For it seems to us now as it did then that we were being invited to answer a triple call:

A call from God:

Renewal is the key-word in all Religious It occupies the attention Institutions to-day. of all Religious Institutes as well as our own. It is concerned less with work in the missionfield and more with the quality of life of the missionary and the value of the witness given by those who live that life at its deepest level. Before, it was customary for Chapters to be principally concerned with the theme of Mission in their deliberations: this is changing. In Sierra Leone recently, the District Chapter directed its attention first to Spiritual Renewal: in this they were not unique. It is simply one of many signs of an evolution in thought and in approach which is both hopeful and encouraging.

May we not see in this a delicate invitation of the Lord and His eternally-active Spirit, over-riding our human thinking and planning? Is not this His way of dealing with His People in every age? We may not ignore such "divine visitations", such indications. However humbly, however tentatively, we must strive to interpret them in the light of Faith.

A Call of the Church:

This is confirmed by the important Apostolic Letter, "Evangelii Nuntiandi", which reflects the thinking of the Bishops in the 1974 Synod: in our world it is not what we say or preach but

the way we live and witness that impresses men. "Above all, the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness", – No. 21, and "For the Church the first means of Evangelisation is the witness of an authentically Christian life" – No. 41. It means giving ourselves to God in a communion nothing can destroy and at the same time giving ourselves to our neighbour witn unlimited zeal.

A Call from our Brethren:

Significantly, the Principal Superiors of French-speaking Africa have adopted as their guiding theme for the coming year "The Witness of our Religious and Community Life". In doing so they are responding to a need, to the growing awareness amongst their confreres that we are, or at least have been, too activist. It was a truism to say, "Work is Prayer" and our apostolic successes tended to make us forget Him Who was the Author of them.

At a time when the idea of Mission is changing, or more correctly is evolving, interior renewal is of primary importance. Should not the missionary life reflect, as circumstances require, the mobility of Abraham, the humility of the Baptist, a "diaspora" scattering us more widely than at present, a greater fraternity and sensitiveness to the unspoken needs of our confreres at times?

We pause here for a moment to share with you the heavy burden we carry, for it is an aspect of the last point of fraternity: we refer to the requests we receive for laicisation. Certainly we are no worse off in this respect than other Institutes but the number is still too high. If only each took seriously the call to interior renewal, these departures would grow less, decisions sometimes regretted later would be avoided and judgements that are far from fraternal would disappear or at least be reduced.

This attention to what we must live and witness to first of all is at the very heart of our four preoccupations: that we renew ourselves spiritually, that we live in community, that we strengthen the bonds that unite us to the rest of the Congregation, and that we are ready to listen to and help the young people who come to us for an answer.

Community Prayer

"All these, with one mind, gave themselves up to prayer" - Acts I, 14.

The early Christian communities considered this to be of primary importance. Indeed, when the Apostles themselves realised that too much of their time was taken bestowing "our care upon tables", with the approval of all they appointed others for these tasks: their principal duty was, they said, to "devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of preaching" – Acts VI, 4. Did not the Lord tell us "to pray always." – Luke 18, I.

"Where two or three are gathered . . . "

I/D No. 16 spoke sufficiently it seems to us about prayer in general. But without wishing to appear to overlook the personal aspect of prayer, we think it useful to recall briefly its community side.

We remember a Provincial who had occasion one day to visit a Spiritan House whose members were of a different language-group to his own. He was deeply impressed: "Here is a Community that prays", he said, "After visiting other Communities who did not appear to pray that much, this was to me like a breath of fresh air."

To pray in common in this way is a support we all need. It is also an apologetic of the Faith to the Christian Community about us and an invitation and appeal to those not of the Faith.

The Demands of Prayer In Common.

We are very happy to observe that, especially in the Districts, Community prayer is being thrown open to include all who share with us the task of evangelisation: religious of both sexes, catechists and other leaders of the laity, and the faithful at large. This greater participation gives an impressive witness to Community of Prayer. It can enrich our prayer-life in other ways also: often it makes us more attentive to the preparation and quality of our prayer and the setting in which it takes place. One is especially conscious of this in Mahommedan countries where we have to be particularly careful.

Personal Prayer Essential.

Personal prayer is, we may say, the other side of the coin: the renewal of our personal prayer is an essential to any renewal of Common Prayer. However lovely it appear, Community prayer that is not nourished on personal prayer, that is not a genuine expression of a personal prayer-life, alone as well as with others, is superficial — a worship of the lips but not of the heart.

Community Life

"There was one heart and soul in all the company of believers; none of them called any of his possessions his own, everything was shared in common". – Acts IV, 32.

Even though it appear slightly idealistic, this witness of the early Christian community invites us to examine seriously our own apostolic life to-day. In Africa or South America, where the sense of community is so strong and where pastoral policy is so community-orientated, what witness do we ourselves give?

Too many Spiritans In Isolation.

Let us face the facts: too many of our confreres are living alone. For a variety of reasons we have too often been too isolated in many cases. Pastoral needs, penury of personnel, our readiness to serve in whatever capacity asked of us, measure the generosity or obedience of those who accepted to live alone for these reasons but do not make the situation less regrettable. Who can fail to have sympathy; for a confrere alone in a mission who can say: "I have lived alone now for 15 years. It started when I was asked to take over a mission

for a year. I am here ever since. I have always asked and wanted to live in Community: now it is too late. I could not face it."

We may not upset such confreres or put pressure on them evidently. We can and must encourage them however to see it as a duty to belong or to seek to belong to a Community either at local or regional level. The frequency of their return to community may vary according to circumstance but we should say that if their visits are only occasional they will lose any real meaning or value. The odd meal with the community in a fraternal atmosphere is both pleasant and necessary but the main purpose of such encounters is missed if they do not provoke serious opportunity for exchange of ideas on our life and work.

A Critical Threshold.

The Principal Superiors of French-speaking Africa, in their Assembly last February, expressed concern at this. If we continue in this way we shall come to a crisis-point sooner rather than later. Everyone is losing out on this: the

Congregation and our confreres; the dioceses and communities where they work. One man alone, without the support of an apostolic Community of which he is a member, can do little to create Christian Communities about him.

In earlier times, people were often sacrificed to the needs of the Apostolate. Given the concept of Evangelisation then prevailing, this might seem justifiable. Even still we can appreciate the anxiety of Bishops that "we must not abandon this or that mission" and their desire that there be a "permanent priest" there. Nevertheless, it is our duty when we dialogue with them to point out the importance of Spiritan religious and missionary life and the contribution it makes to the apostolate we exercise on their behalf.

The ideal Spiritan Community should be small, preferably three rather than two, to ensure a more balanced relationship, a richer interpersonal exchange and to lessen possible tensions that might arise. Congregations making foundations in the new countries at the present time are very definite on this point. Finally, a renewal of pastoral policy along these lines will make it possible for us to spread ourselves more widely and fulfil our mission with greater efficiency.

Different kinds of Community.

The General Chapter of 1974 accepted that there could be many different kinds of Community: we could, for example, live in Community with the local clergy and with members of other Institutes. Every true Community has a real witness-value. Such Communities, which may even include lay-people and especially lay-leaders if the Superior of the District or Province approves, put the particular charisms of the individual at the disposition of all and carry our witness into the heart of the territory where we work.

The Superior-General of the Jesuits, Father Arrupe, spoke in similar terms recently:

"Community life will continue to be a distinctive characteristic of religious life in the future, even though the form it takes will vary with the Institutes. It will be realised in a deeper, more apostolic way through greater interpersonal relationships in prayer and in apostolic reflection together. This will be accompanied by the conviction that this way of living must not lead to introversion but must favour a life that in spirituality and action accords with the spirit of the Institute.

Community life will be more open and lose at least in part something of the reserve which made it an unknown quantity to many. Apostolic contact will, in consequence, require greater openness and this in turn will require a style of life that gives true witness. This same contact with souls will call for changes in the way of life of a big community which if it remains closed will become an isolated institution. It should be reduced in size so that it may be a yeast at work amongst the people of God by its community of life and its participation in the real life of the world about it.

New forms of authentic community life should be envisaged which have as criterion a greater flexibility of adaptation. This will allow for a fruitful pluralism, even inside the Institute itself."

Relationship With The Congregation

A Challenge.

In recent years, the common bond uniting all our confreres has been put to the test.: "Our Missions" have now become Local Churches. It is they who are responsible for Evangelisation; it is they who determine pastoral policy; it is they who have the task of "incarnating" the Gospel in their own cultures. Our place and role has changed; we are at the service of these Churches, called to do specific work in the way they have determined. much stress has been put upon these points that at times even our very presence in these territories was called in question. On the other hand some confreres had eyes only for the Local Church. The insistence on "incarnation" meant that we were increasingly becoming more identified with the local Church. Some even went so far as to conclude that the time for ivissionary Institutes was over.

"A Spirit of Universality."

In this situation there was danger that local Churches, even the missionaries themselves, might become too inward-looking, and that links with the Congregation might be loosened. Fortunately, this did not happen. In the light of Vatican II and the Synods of the Bishops, the local Churches grew to realise that they had co-responsibility with others for the Mission and a corresponding openness to the Universal The "Spirit of dimension of the Church. Universality" necessary for every missionary has been testified to by "Evangelii Nuntiandi": more recently in October 1977, in his Message for Mission Sunday, Pope Paul insisted upon the same point.

New Relationships.

This openness to the spirit of universality is characteristic of the renewal in the Congrega

tion and helps to draw its members closer together. Our General Chapter of 1974 was dominated by concern for internationality. In the Enlarged General Council of 1976, the principal subjects discussed were solidarity and co-responsibility. August 1977 saw the Meeting of Young Spiritans from our Provinces and Districts and December 1977 the Meeting of Spiritan Formation Directors. About the same time the first International Teams were setting out for Angola and Pakistan. No doubt when the Enlarged General Council of 1978 meets in May we shall see further progress on the way of solidarity and the distribution of personnel, leading us still further afield. The number of confreres interested in Libermann and his original inspiration is growing. Even as our Spiritan identity is being more clearly defined, our common project is being formulated in fresh terms and our vocation in the Church becomes more universal.

While this openness of the whole Congregation is a contribution to the prevailing emphasis on the Church, the individual member of the Congregation can have a real share in it principally by his personal attachment to the Spiritan family. It is in and through this attachment that he contributes to the Universal Mission of the Church.

The Congregation and Local Churches.

At this level that the Congregation, can be most particularly helpful to Local Churches. It is true we may not identify ourselves too closely with any one: that would isolate us from the wider vocation conferred on us by the Universal Church. She asks us to give special witness to her universality and if we did not bring that witness to the local Churches. we would be failing both them and Her. It is our good fortune to be present in many different local Churches and we may not fail them. They for their part must accept that inter-Church exchange which characterises Mission to-day is an expression of what they themselves are expected to live and witness to. Missionary activity and sending is not all one way.

This does not make our work any easier. If faithful to our commitments we live in a state of tension between the whole-hearted dedication of ourselves to the particular Church we serve and a necessary sensitiveness to even more urgent calls and needs elsewhere, which require the wholehearted solidarity of all our members. Only the strength of the bonds that unite us in the Spiritan family can help us to preserve the right balance between these two.

Spiritan Vocations

The Importance of A LOCAL Clergy . . .

At one time on the missions great importance was given to the establishment of a local clergy, essential to of a local Church. This is still a prior consideration. It also explains the reluctance of Missionary Institutes in the past to look for vocations for their own society in mission-lands. The few who did become Spiritans in those days had to accept a way of life little adapted to their own background. Their very fewness itself put them as it were on the perimeter of the Congregation.

Even after the establishment of local Churches some Bishops, often for good reasons, were reluctant to see young Africans join Congregations which were not of local origin.

. . . And of RELIGIOUS-MISSIONARY Vocations.

Almost everywhere this has changed. There has been an increase in vocations to the local Churches in the Third World. More importantly, these Churches have become increasingly aware of their duty to participate in the Universal Mission of the Church. In consequence, their Bishops are happy to welcome in missionary and religious vocations.

We have a duty of cultivating such vocations in collaboration white the local Bishop and

People. At home or abroad their lives will be an enrichment of their own Church and a witness to its concern for the Church and world beyond their own boundaries.

Should some of these wish to become Spiritans, then we must give them the opportunity of living the particular charism of our Congregation in accordance with their own culture. It is likewise important that they become sufficiently numerous to make their own way in a Spiritan context.

The Congregation for its part must show a great openness and flexibility where Spiritans of other cultures are concerned. She must also accept the changes their presence amongst us will bring.

It is Christ Who Calls, but . . .

At the dawn of every vocation, there is Christ: But, we too have our part to play. We must be such that young people seeking may find our houses places of prayer and fraternal sharing that answer their aspirations.

If our Communities are havens of prayer and life, giving authentic witness; if we are universal in our outlook and spirit, welcoming and open, then our hope for the future is immense. They will come and see and spend the rest of life's day with us.

I/D 18

The Generalate Team

September-October 1978

Spiritan Life and Spiritan Mission

The Enlarged Council at Knechtsteden, 1978

More and more it becomes clear that the emphasis given to Mission is changing: today stress is put less on work, even apostolic work, and more on the living witness we give: the first means of evangelization is the witness of our lives. Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers it is because they are witnesses (Evan. Nunt. 41). Our Spiritan life should

give this witness; but as Spiritans our Mission is also our Life: how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? ... So faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ (Rom. 10, 14, 17). The main themes of the Enlarged Council of 1978 were Spiritan Life and Spiritan Mission.

SPIRITAN LIFE

Prayer and Community

During the Enlarged Council at Knechsteden, the major superiors exchanged experiences of prayer and community. However general the desire for community and prayer is among Spiritans, some communities experience tension about the manner of prayer and the way of living community: a situation which one provincial described as 'disparity of cult'.

In some communities the majority preferred traditional forms of community prayer, while others preferred shared prayer or charismatic prayer. Some would like to hold prayer meetings in the community to which people from outside would be invited; others regard such meetings as an intrusion on their privacy. Because of this opposition some confreres go outside the community to pray. There are communities where prayer meetings are held, but some feel unable to join them. Some communities recite together the litanies, the *Veni Sancte* and the rosary, but not everybody attends.

In the mission districts there was sometimes a 'conflict of generations' about the manner of prayer: older men often preferred the traditional forms, which younger men found repetitive and monotonous.

There was agreement about the need to pray more but different ideas about how to do it. If a community is to become a praying community, reconciliation and mutual acceptance are necessary. Existentialists must learn to understand Thomists, and the community as Institution must also become a community of Communion.

New kinds of praying communities

There is however a growing number of Spiritan communities where community is celebrated in a common Eucharist, in shared prayer and liturgical prayer. Such communities are centres of attraction for many young people who share in their prayer and community life in varying degrees. Such a community is seen as a place of evangelization for its various kinds of members. It seeks to give testimony to the gospel by a life of poverty and by work for the poor and for justice.

'A transparent community'

A community which opens itself to others is very demanding on its members. It seeks to welcome everyone who comes, and often breaks bread with them. 'Where do you live?' asked the disciples of John. 'Come and see' was Jesus' reply. The Spiritans are frequently put into question by visitors and friends. Young people who have shared the day's gospel with the permanent members do not hesitate to comment adversely if they think the Spiritans' life-style is not in accordance with it and if they do not seem to be men of prayer and workers for justice. Such criticism helps the Spiritan members constantly to review and improve their gospel witness: they have no cloister to take refuge in; they live in a 'transparent community' where they must practice what they preach.

'Come and see'

The form of prayer may vary from day to day to suit the guests who are present. It is important that such communities have good 'animators' who know how to favour the spiritual growth of all and who do not allow the community to fall into selfish routine. The community often provides instruction and spiritual direction for young people who are drawn to a life of prayer or to a religious and missionary vocation.

'The contemplative dimension of prayer'

The 'Young Spiritans' at the Enlarged Council saw Spiritan community in a similar way. Since the Spiritan charism is a special love for the poor, a Spiritan community should be characterised by the same love of its members for each other.

The Aranda meeting had asked the Spiritans should rediscover and live the contemplative dimension of prayer through the 'practical union' of which Libermann speaks. Our meetings with the Lord should become more sincere and frequent so as to make us more readily to give ourselves to his service and to the service of men.

'Eaten up by work'

The testimony of the District Superiors suggested that Spiritans find themselves challenged to a more intense prayer by the exigencies of apostolic work: their work leads them to prayer and community rather than the other way around: from work to prayer in community rather than from community and prayer to work.

Many missionaries were finding that work without prayer was spiritually impoverishing: they felt 'eaten up by work'. It was not fully true to say that work was prayer. The busier a man was, the more he needed time for silence and prayer — 'to go apart and rest awhile'.

Living in community

The members of the Enlarged Council also discussed the need of many confreres to live in a Spiritan community of life and work, which they saw as a necessary condition of their apostolic work.

In the name of pastoral necessity, many confreres live alone, both in the districts and in pastoral work in the provinces. It was recognised that after many years of living alone a Spiritan might find it impossible to return to community life.

The District superiors asked for a statement from the Enlarged Council which would call on all in posts of responsibility to promote and maintain common life and work in apostolic teams, whether with Spiritans or with other missionaries. The purpose of the statement was to prevent the dispersal of those living in community and to bring back to community those who wished to do so.

'We are religious missionaries'

In his talk on the consecrated layman in the Congregation, Brother Jean-Pierre Delsarte described

a community experiment in Chevilly, inspired by the capitular texts, which was intended to discover how consecrated laymen could live together as missionaries in a larger community: they were not a kind of lesser clerics but men who had received a specific call to be missionaries in a specific missionary institute. In the course of the experiment the Brothers realized that the difference between vocations was not between priest and non-priest but was to be understood in term of ministries to be done and of the charisms necessary for the growth of the community.

What came out of the discussion which followed was the importance of us seeing ourselves as missionary religious. There may be an unconscious assumption amongst us that the priesthood is more 'important' than the religious life: that the Fathers are mainly priests and that the brothers are religious. Until the members of the Congregation accept, existentially as well as theoretically, that we are all brothers, sharing the same religious commitment, there will always be a certain alienation in the Congregation. The Chapter of 1974 has said it already:

All the members of the Congregation share in one common project. All are gathered into one fraternal community, all share in the same rights and duties in a diversity of service, the service of the priest and the service of the consecrated layman. While the equality of Fathers and Brothers is accepted, a greater effort is still needed on both sides to change attitudes and ways of acting (Guidelines, 56.57).

Are we becoming too pietistic?

During the last few years, the texts of local chapters point to the growing interest of the confreres in prayer, liturgical and charismatic, shared prayer and mental prayer; in directed retreats, days of recollection, even in houses of prayer.

At Knechtsteden, some fears were expressed of a too narrow concept of spiritual renewal. Emphasis on spiritual renewal should not lead to a dichotomy: renewal in prayer and community life should lead to a concern for and an involvement in the fight for justice and for the poor. We should beware of a 'disincarnate' or a 'prehistoric' spirituality. Spiritual renewal should not mean a restoration of the ancien regime. Spiritans are not Carthusians: our contemplation should lead to action; we should be in actione contemplativus.

The warning was apposite: some prayer movements today seem to shun involvement in the struggle for justice in the world, and where this is so, doubt can be placed on the quality of their prayer. True prayer is standing before God: it is not self-contemplation or navel-gazing. God's first words to Moses forced him to involve himself in the struggle for justice:

I have heard the cry of the sons of Israel and I have witnessed how the Egyptians oppress them, so come! I send you to Pharaoh to bring the sons of Israel, my people, out of Egypt (Ex. 3, 9-10).

True prayer does not take us out of the world but sends us into it, as Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah were sent. Like Paul, the missionary is:

A chosen instrument to bring the name of God before pagans and pagan kings and before the people of Israel. I myself will show him how much he must suffer in my name (Acts, 9, 15-16).

The Unity of the Spiritan Apostolic Life

Missionary activity and the religious life – which may exist separately in the Church – are united for the Spiritan in the concrete unity of one and the same response to 'God who calls him to give himself entirely to the work of the gospel'. It follows that, for us, 'the religious spirit belongs to the nature of the apostolic life which it animates and this in turn belongs to the nature of the religious life (CDD 20).

The other big theme of the Enlarged Council at Knechtsteden was

CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN SPIRITAN MISSION

In the context of furthering the autonomy of local churches, the Chapter of 1974 asked for lists of apostolic priorities to be drawn up, for present commitments to be examined in the light of these priorities, and that these priorities be taken into account in the making of first appointments and in the exchange of personnel (Guidelines 13; 138).

A long list of Pastoral Priorities

The list was ready for the Enlarged Council in Knechtsteden. It was a very long list, even though the General Council had short-listed a group of several items, from which the Enlarged Council were asked to pick three priority missionary commitments for 1978.

How to choose?

in many cases the needs expressed seemed to take for granted a permanent presence in an area and to leave unanswered the question of possible disengagement for the good of the local church. Could some of the needs be fulfilled by calling on other missionary societies or on Fidei Donum priests? One of the 'signs of the times' was the increasing rôle of lav-missionaries: could they not help also? The needs presented were all within our present circumscriptions: were there not greater needs outside our present commitments? We are diminishing in numbers at present: can we answer every need? How could we talk of co-responsibility in a common mission when we knew there were other needs, as for example, work for immigrants, which might have priority at provincial level but which were not included in the list? Were we moving in the direction of a bi-annual lottery in which three deserving cases would be chosen to which personnel would be contributed if something were left over when the needs of the circumscriptions were fulfilled?

We sought for criteria to guide us in our choice: the needs of the Congregation as a whole, vocations, new foundations, formation, provinces in danger through serious loss of personnel; works with a sign value for the future.

Mission Priorities of 1978

In the final choice, all the priorities short-listed by the General Council were included, with the addition of the work for immigrants.

A major priority was the supply of formation personnel for the new Spiritan foundation in Angola, East Africa, Francophone Africa Brazil and Puerto Rico.

Another priority was an international team for Bethlehem in South Africa. This is a mission for which it is difficult to find volunteers. There are as yet no indigenous priests there. Of the 19 Spiritans working in the diocese, 5 are over 70 years of age. A third priority was personnel for the Missionary Animation Centre in Gentinnes, Belgium. Since the Kongolo massacres, the Province has been going through a difficult period: vocations are nil and unless help comes from outside the province, Gentinnes will have to close.

The Enlarged Council approved five other priorities. As a sign of the need to reanimate old works in the provinces, it approved of the formation of a qualified team for Auteuil. It declared work for immigrants to be a missionary priority. It approved of a team to evangelize the Manjaque tribe in Guinea-Bissau. As a sign of the need some districts have for personnel, the diocese of Bafia in the Cameroun, of Kindu in Zaire and the international team in Mexico received special mention. The urgent need the Congregation has for theological and other specialists was also noted.

The International Teams

The strenghtening of the international teams in Pakistan, Paraguay and Angola remain as priorities. In Angola teams are required for the formation of basic communities and for the training of community leaders. It is hoped that young Angolan Spiritans will be incorporated into these teams during the period of team-formation. We are still at an experimental stage in the Pakistan foundation: visa problems make it likely that future members will come from Commonwealth countries, such as Britain, Nigeria, East Africa, Canada, and also from Ireland. There are still great missionary needs in Paraguay.

International formation for the Mission

The Enlarged Council approved of the Summer Experience of International Formation, which will take place in 1979. This will give a fairly large number of young Spiritans an experience of several weeks in international living together. International formation is necessary in view of future international teams. Internationality meets the requirement of mission today, which takes place in the context of a universal church, without boundaries or frontiers (Evan. Nunt. 61). International teams may be 'the shape of things to come': not bizarre alternatives to the present Districts but new structures which gradually, over the years, will replace the present Districts.

Questions for the future

When the revised list of eight priorities was presented to the Enlarged Council, the list was voted without discussion and without perceptible enthusiasm. In 1976 there was a certain euphoria: it was easy

to visualise a few small teams. With the cooperation of the Provinces the General Council could have its international teams just as the Provinces have their Districts. Did we try to please as many as possible by putting eight items on the list instead of three? Will we be as equally committed to the eight priorities as we were to the three of 1976? We can hardly say to the Province of Belgium or to the District of Bethlehem, "'I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty', without giving them the bare necessities of life" (cf. James 2,16). If the concept of co-responsibility for the common missionary Project of the Congregation is to grow in meaning, we must think in future of the mission of the Congregation as a whole, and see the needs of our particular Spiritan circumscription in this context; and we must not see the missionary priorities of the Congregation as a sort of alms-box to which we contribute when other personnel needs have ben fulfilled. Just as personal projects should be fitted into the Project of the Congregation (Guidelines 60) so also the projects of circumscriptions. As the Congregation grows rapidly smaller, its survival will depend on this co-responsibility, on this internationality.

THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1980

The Enlarged Council also decided that the General Chapter of 1980 should have for subject THE SPIRITAN LIFE. The Chapter will therefore be concerned with **Spiritual Renewal for Mission**, and will also be a sharing together of the new directions the Congregation is taking. We need objectives that are clear and accepted and our life-style must be in conformity with them. Spiritan life means involvement in the struggle for justice.

A Celebration

The Chapter of 1978 is to be a celebration. The delegates will live together the Spiritan life in Chevilly and will go back as 'animators' to their circumscriptions. It will not be a study-session. Celebration

is not the attitude of one who goes to the Chapter to secure victory for his own thesis. The poles of reference will be from the actual living of the Spiritan life to its celebration in faith. It will be a celebration as the Eucharist is a celebration.

The day the Enlarged Council closed, the Office of readings provided an apt quotation:

Celebrate then, as members of the one body of Christ. Your celebration will not be in vain if you are what you celebrate, if you hold fast to the Church which the Lord filled with his Holy Spirit; he acknowledges it as his own as it grows all over the world and is himself acknowledged as his Church.

The unknown African author was speaking of the celebration of Pentecost: let us pray that the Chapter of 1980 be also a celebration of Pentecost.

"... A Chapter is always a 'paschal celebration'... with everything Easter contains in relation to the cross and hope, to death and resurrection. A Chapter is not a mere study meeting, a superficial gathering or a short-lived revision of life... It is above all a 'penitential' celebration which aims at living two things deeply: a sincere attitude of conversion and a deep and painful search for the Lord's ways. God's ways must be discovered every day in pain and in hope. Because it is a 'penitential' celebration, a Chapter is always carried on in the joy and sincerity of brotherly charity.

How important it is to stress the penitential aspect of a Chapter! It means a serene and profound examination of conscience, with the consequent change of mentality and life; and it means a painful search for God's will in the present necessities of consecrated life... What can we do so that consecrated life may really be to-day a sign of the holiness of God and of the presence of his Kingdom?

But, being a real paschal celebration, it is not just the penitential aspects that interest us in a Chapter. It is its whole dimension of paschal newness — of creation in the Spirit — and of firm committed hope. Every Chapter must leave a sensation of freshness in the Church, a good dose of paschal optimism, if the Chapter has been celebrated well in an attitude of poverty, prayer and brotherly charity..." (Cardinal Edouardo PIRONIO, Prefect of the S.C. of Religious. The full text is to be found in the English Edition of the Osservatore Romano, 16/9/76).

The Generalate Team 195; Clivo di Cinna, 00136 ROMA, Italia

DECISIONS OF THE ENLARGED GENERAL COUNCIL, 1978

Supplement to I/D no. 18, Sept.-Oct. 1978

C.G.E. 78, 42

SPIRITAN LIFE

The Enlarged General Council considers the renewal of Spiritan life an urgent priority of the Congregation. The many signs of such a renewal amongst us and elsewhere may surely be seen as a call from God to the Congregation in our time.

The E.G.C. draws our attention to two aspects of this renewal: renewal of prayer life and renewal of community life.

A - Prayer

The efforts of confreres and communities to realize a deepening of prayer, particularly community prayer, is welcomed. The search for a diversity of forms of prayer is to be encouraged, provided this is done with respect and consideration for others, and is undertaken in shared concern for the advancement in prayer of all the members of the community. The E.G.C. urges those in positions of responsibility in the Congregation to promote this renewal in prayer and to encourage the confreres in the work of animation.

B - Community

The E.G.C. draws attention:

- to the importance the Church gives today to the community as a privileged place of evangelization both for the community itself and in view of the apostolic ministry;
- to the express desire of a number of confreres to return to community life;
- to the aspirations for a more genuine community life;
- to the desire of young confreres to live in community.

The E.G.C. welcomes this new awareness, which is in line with the original tradition of the Congregation:

"In view of the perfect realization of the apostolic life which is its purpose, of the stability and extension of the works with which it is concerned, the Congregation has taken the common life as its fundamental rule." (Règle Provisoire of 1849, no. 15)

It is for us to see that Libermann's intuition is lived out today and in the future. In fact, we notice that too many communities have been broken up, or risk being broken up in the future, in the name of some pastoral necessity.

In view of these considerations, the E.G.C. asks those in positions of responsibility in the Congregation at every level to make a special effort to promote common life and team apostolate. (cf. G.A., nos. 78, 80).

C.G.E. 78, 43 MISSION PRIORITIES REALIZED IN CO-RESPONSIBILITY

1° - Three Typical Priorities:

- 1) Spiritan Foundations:
- formation personnel for: the young Province of Angola, East African Foundation, French-speaking African Foundation and those of Brazil and Puerto Rico;
- reasons: to encourage missionary vocations in the young Churches and to give the Congregation a living place in them.
- 2) District of Bethlehem; an international team.
- reasons: the special difficulties of this District;
 - difficulty of a district to realize the implantation of a local Church.
- 3) Province of Belgium: a team for Gentinnes.
- reasons: an old Province in difficulty;
 - to encourage its evident determination to survive.

N.B.: The 1976 priorities remain: Angola, Paraguay, Pakistan.

2° - Other Priorities:

- 1) Diversification of Congregation commitments: a team for the service of the Mandjaques in Guinea-Bissau.
- 2) Specialists requested for specific tasks:
- for the Missionary Institute London;
- an animation team for: Guyana-Martinique-Guadeloupe;
- a theologian for the islands of Reunion, Mauritius and Madagascar;
- for Duquesne University;
- specialists for Islam;
- required personnel for the Generalate

- 3) Restoration and re-orientation of the old works: a team of animation for Auteuil.
- 4) Province commitments: work for immigrants.
- 5) Personnel for Districts: Diocese of Bafia, Diocese of Kindu (Kongolo) and Mexico.

3° - Perspectives: The Future: The E.G.C. encourages the Generalate Team:

- 1) to continue its exploration of Middle East prospects (dialogue with Islam);
- 2) to explore prospects in Asia;
- 3) to be attentive to calls from outside our present commitments;
- 4) to consider carefully the possibilities of lay-missionary involvement;
- 5) to direct attention to questions of Justice and Peace;
- 6) to re-evaluate works which seem to be nearing completion;
- 7) to examine the possibilities of a West African Foundation.

C.G.E. 78. 45 SUMMER EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONALITY IN FORMATION

The first session of Summer Experience of Internationality in Formation would take place during the summer of 1979.

Fathers Geoghegan (Ireland) and Le Floc'h (France) were appointed to the Organizational Committee. There will also be two representatives of the Young Spiritans in Formation on the Committee. It was suggested that one be from England and one from Portugal or Spain.

2/3 of the members of the E.G.C. favored holding the session at Gentinnes in Belgium. Aranda in Spain also had supporters. The final decision is left to the Organizational Committee, which will have the thinking of the E.G.C. to aid it.

C.G.E. 78,46

1980 GENERAL CHAPTER

- 1) The General Chapter of 1980 will be an "Animation" and a "Celebration".
- to study and clarify one MAJOR THEME in the context of the Congregation as a guide for the following six years;
- to celebrate what draws us together TO BE something that we call SPIRITAN;
- in the hope that the delegates will be prepared to go back as animators to their circumscriptions.
- 2) The representation system will be similar to that used in 1974, with the necessary adjustments and with formal representation of stated special groups.
- 3) The ONE MAJOR SUBJECT (recognizing the need for some required acts of legislation) will be THE SPIRITAN LIFE: a sharing together of the new directions the Congregation is actually taking, with emphasis more on the LIFE of Spiritans. (There is a perceptible move from concentration upon missionary strategy towards deepening realization of the life-quality of the Congregation).
- 4) Place: CHEVILLY. Time: JULY, 1980, for one month maximum.

C.G.E. 78, 47 THE BROTHERS AND THE CONGREGATION'S CLERICAL STATUS

To the question: "Do you favour the consultation of all the members of the Congregation as to whether or not to maintain the Congregation's clerical status?", the E.G.C., after explanation and discussion, gave a NEGATIVE reply to the question of initiating this consultation. (Cf. I/D 18, p. 2).

C.G.E. 78, 48

YOUNG SPIRITANS

- 1) To be better situated in the orientation of the Congregation, that is, internationality and co-responsibility, we would wish to appoint a young Spiritan co-ordinator, who would LIAISE with a representative of each Province and Foundation.
- 2) This cross-frontier dialogue of Young Spiritans should not take place in isolation from the rest of our Spiritan family. In particular, there should be a close bond uniting them to the Generalate Team, of which one would have responsibility for Young Spiritans, and also with those holding posts of responsibility in the Provinces and Foundations.

C.G.E. 78, 49

FINANCES

For the distribution of funds mentioned in G.A., no. 171 C, and accounted for in Document E.G.C. 78, 17: 55,000, alloted to Portugal.

- \$ 135,000, which could have been allocated to the Province of France, will be deposited as a part of "Cor Unum" fund whose annual revenues make possible our annual allocations. Thus we could write FINIS to the "debt" of the Province of France to the General Administration.

With respect to the Personal Contribution:

- 1) The principle of the personal contribution is maintained as an expression of solidarity in the Congregation.
- 2) But, bearing in mind the need for decentralization, each circumscription will assure the collection of this contribution at the present sum in force in the circumscription.
- 3) For confreres working outside their Province of Origin, it will be duty of the circumscription to forward half of the contribution collected to the Province of Origin.
- 4) Circumscriptions wishing to express solidarity with the Congregation in another way must take into account the choice made by the Province of Origin of each one.
- 5) These decisions to be put into effect from JANUARY I, 1979.

I/D 19

The Generalate Team

December 1978

Father Jacques Laval

"I trust in the infinite goodness of God, Who has never failed me when I put my confidence in Him and sought only to do His holy and adorable Will. Whenever I tried to have my own way, to take the bit in my own teeth, I only made a fool of myself."

(J. Laval, Pinterville, February II, 1839.)

In the history of a religious Congregation the beatification of one of its members is a special moment of grace for all which requires the response of conversion and of faith. Unexpectedly for most of us, the announcement has come of the beatification of Pere Laval. Saints have been canonized who were scarcely known outside their own Congregation; in the case of Laval things are different: he is revered as a saint in Mauritius while many Spiritans know very little about him. God sometimes speaks to us unexpectedly, not only in our reading of Sacred Scripture but also in his saints, through whom 'the

light of the glory of God on the face of Christ Jesus' is reflected on the world. Just as we meditate on Sacred Scripture so we should meditate on the lives of the saints: in the life of Laval we will find 'a new reason for seeking the city which is to come', we will find 'a most safe path by which, in keeping with the state of life and condition proper to each of us, we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ' (cf. L.G. 50). Each Spiritan, each Spiritan community will no doubt read and meditate on the life of Pere Laval during the coming months. This short paper is only the fruit of one such reflection.

The universal appeal of Laval.

Not a day passes but groups of pilgrims come together at the tomb of Laval: Catholics and Protestants, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Confucianists; Europeans, Indians, Africans and Chinese. People of every race, nation and religion revere him as a man of God; so great is the power of God manifested through one of his saints. They come to him to be healed of their miseries and their distress: "Those who were suffering from diseases and painful complaints of one kind and another, the possessed, epileptics, the paralysed, were all brought to him, and he cured them" (Matt. 4, 24). A country which is divided into several ethnic and religious communities, where clashes between Christians and Muslims have occurred in recent years, finds a common meeting-place at the tomb of a man, who because he loved the poor, is accepted by all as their common father.

The universality of Laval's appeal today must be

put side by side with the fact that Laval came to Mauritius to work with the freed black slaves, and that he retained this specialized apostolate throughout his life. He came to evangelise the poor and he brought the rich to God also; before he died the majority of the population were Christian, for those were the days before the mass immigration to Mauritius from the Asiatic sub-continent. To day the crowds united at the tomb of Laval 'from every nation under heaven' represent in microcosm the world of today: a world seeking for brotherhood and universality; a world which though divided looks to Christ for its unity. In these days, when the Church has begun a serious dialogue with non-Christians, the life of Laval may have something to teach us: that the most effective form of dialogue with non-Christians is holiness of life and the preaching of the gospel to the poor.

"He has sent me to bring the Gospel to the Poor"

The Sending

Even as a boy, Laval had a kind heart for the poor and suffering. At the end of his studies in the College Stanislaus, he hesitated whether to become priest or doctor: both vocations allowed him to serve suffering humanity. As a young doctor he gave his services free to the poor and often brought them medicine and food. After a few years' medical practice he entered the seminary. He had thought of becoming a Vincentian to go on the Chinese missions, but Galais, his spiritual director in the seminary, thought him too old (and perhaps not clever enough) to learn Chinese. When after a few years of ministry in Pinterville, Galais called him to join the "Work for the Blacks" Laval felt the call as a liberation; he was free now to preach the gospel to the poor. When after his conversation with Galais he began the celebration of mass, his eyes fell on the first words of the introit of the day: "Diripuisti vincula mea", thou hast broken my bonds, they filled with tears and he celebrated mass with great tenderness and devotion. "If I leave you it is because God wishes me to become a missionary' he said to the people of Pinterville. He left for Mauritius as the first missionary of the new Society: he had done no novitiate, because the novitiate had not been opened. All he knew of its Rule was what Galais had told him: he was to devote his life to the black ministry and to live in obedience and poverty. He knew practically nothing about Mauritius before he went there: perhaps only that the freed slaves there were more 'abandoned' than the people of Pinterville and he had made a free choice that the evangelization of the blacks would be his life's

The Poor and the Rich

When Laval arrived in Mauritius, Bishop Collier gave him his heart's desire, the mission to the blacks who in those days were among the "poor and most despised peoples, whose needs are greatest and who are the most neglected in God's Church." There was no middle-class in the modern sense, but a clear distinction between rich and poor, between former slave-owners and former slaves. By 1844 the conversion of the rich white population had begun, not directly by Laval but by the black house-servants whom Laval had converted. Laval saw a way to the salvation of the rich by encouraging their charity to the poor. By 1855 many rich whites were members of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul: in imitation of Laval's black converts, they distributed food and medicine, taught catechism to children and prepared the sick for baptism and communion.

The Suffering

The poor remained always Laval's main preoccupation. When he visited the hospital however,

he made no distinction between rich and poor, Muslims, Protestants or Catholics: they were all suffering members of Jesus Christ. Once a rich lady came to confession: "let me look after my poor blacks" he said. Her reply was like that of the Canaanite woman to Jesus: "Don't reject me, Father, I am more miserable than any of your poor blacks. At least they can see their children and caress them, but I live in an eternal night". Tears came to Laval's eyes and he said, "You have touched me, Madame. Go into the church, I will come in a moment".

The Gospel to the Poor – a Pastoral specialization?

When the Canaanite woman asked Jesus to heal her daughter, Jesus said in reply, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' rather as Laval said, 'Leave me to my poor blacks'. The reply of the Canaanite woman was like that of the rich Mauritian lady: 'even house-dogs can eat the scraps that fall from the master's table'. In each case there is an apparent initial exclusivism, which appears to be a necessary spring-board for the universality of the gospel preaching afterwards. Christ preached the gospel to the poor, Laval did also; one may wonder whether to preach the gospel to the poor is one option among others: - Laval preached to the poor - I opt for the rich - you can look after the middle classes - or whether preaching the gospel to the poor' is not a necessary concomitant of all evangelical preaching, and that the rich house-dogs will always eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of the poor, their masters. At any rate, Laval's procedure was perfectly in line with the Regle Provisoire: ... the missionaries of the Congregation shall not neglect those people who do not belong to the category of those for whose salvation they are specially called . . . The latter work however should not be prejudical to those to whom the Divine Master has particularly sent them.

Who are the poor to-day?

In Laval's day there was a clear distinction between rich and poor in most countries: the masses were poor and a small minority were rich. In the affluent West today the really poor are a small marginalized group. In the world today the distinction between rich and poor is more a distinction between rich and poor nations than between classes in the same society. Spiritans have to ask themselves, who and where are the 'poor and most abandoned' today.

Laval The Missionary

Missionary priorities

Laval's apostolate was 'missionary' in the deepest sense of the term: it was a continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ, who came to tell the good news to the poor: he sought to inflame those he loved with the fire of the love of God and to liberate them from everything opposed to their salvation, in this world as in the next. From the first moment of his arrival he seems to have realized the missionary needs of Mauritius. The story of the conversion of the island reads like a test-case in missionary planning: he chose his missionary priorities and went step by step according to a plan which was never written but was rather the product of a subconscious and unformulated intuition.

Adult Christianity

The first object of his evangelization was adult society. "Make good parents and you will have good children" he would say. His first years were spent in the catechisis of adults: he was a born catechist himself and from his seminary days he wanted to make the catechism comprehensible to ordinary people. Before long he was able to pass on the ministry of catechesis to the lay cooperators he had trained. Almost all were former slaves and they became catechists, prayer-leaders, leaders of local communities, church builders. He became free to spent more and more of his time in the confessional, the hospital and the prison. He often delayed baptism for over a year and was exigent in demanding guarantees of perseverance. After first communion they became members of the group of 'Perseverants' and much was demanded of them.

Church Building

By 1845 there was already a strong movement among the blacks towards the church and the time had come to build chapels. Forty chapels had been built by 1848: they seem to rise up by magic, wrote Bishop Collier. Most of them were built by the new Christian communities themselves, aided by those missionaries who understood building techniques. The church of wood, brick or stone was a by-product of the fervour of the Christian community, already built up of living stones. So great was the ability of Laval to inspire others that though he himself seemed hardly ever to leave the confessional, the churches got built all the same. As the small communities increased in size and number, new chapels were built and old ones were enlarged. Every evening they were filled with peopl who came to listen to the instructions of the local catechist.

Apostolate of Youth

Laval had begun his pastoral work with the adults, and his first objective had been the building up of Christian families. By 1853 the former slaves, natives of Mozambique and Madagascar for the most part, were already baptised and their marriages were in order. More than half the Christians were now the children of these Christian families. Another stage in Laval's pastoral plan was initiated and the Christian education of youth became a major priority. Laval turned to the building of schools and set about bringing in teaching Congregations to take charge of them.

Laval: Community and Prayer

The Missionary who lived alone

When Laval left for Mauritius he expected shortly to be joined by other confreres. However the British administration questioned the loyality of French citizens and was unwilling to allow French priests to work on the island. Laval was happy to be the first missionary of his 'small and poor Society' but he often felt lonely: "I pray our Lord that he will send me one of you to help and encourage me, especially to talk to me about God, because here I have nobody to talk about our divine Master." His words tell us something of what he expected of community life. In those days he spent his free time when he still had some before the Blessed Sacrament: it was there he took his recreation. Libermann wrote to console him: "Try again and wait for God's moment: if hecoodary you can

always go to Madagascar". Eventually in 1846 a change of government in England made it possible for confreres to join him. He had lived alone for five years, but always against his will.

Laval and his Spiritan confreres

When Laval was joined by younger confreres, he was naturally appointed their superior. Lambert, the first young priest to join him, found him "a good father, kind, charitable, and attentive to the needs of his missionaries, indulgent to my faults and bad humour... He has a gift of making you do what he wants, not by giving orders but by making kind suggestions". Le Vavasseur thought him a poor superior: "he doesn't give orders enough and lets each man do what he likes"! But if he did not improse immoulf, it was not due to weathers.

time he was Principal Superior he wrote to Schwindenhammer, "the matter has been exaggerated. young men have just arrived and they think they can do better than the older men. They don't like to listen to advice or counsel and want to do things their way. If one tries to impose authority one risks breaking everything. If one has enough patience, things fall into place at the end". His style as superior would perhaps be more acceptable today than in those days when a good superior was expected to give plenty of orders and to keep the reins of command firmly in his hands. Laval was very respectful of the dignity of the other person, very humble and self-effacing. When firm direction became necessary as during the Cholera epidemic, he organized his missionaries with the efficiency of an army general: yet he could write, "Everybody is very content and works with good will. Christian joy has not left our little community".

"If only Laval knew the Rule a bit better"

As a superior Laval was expected to keep a balance between the requirements of the apostolate and the need for regularity in community life. The Rule was singularly unadapted to apostolic needs requiring as it did five hours a day to fulfil exercises of rule over and above time for meals and for saying the breviary. The young missionaries had been taught in the novitiate the importance of keeping the rule and "the necessity of being more religious than missionary". They were confused between the obvious sanctity of Laval and the fact that, say, he would hear confessions during the time for recrea-Thiers complained, "We have nothing in common here except meals, particular examen and night prayer: everything suffers: prayer, community life, the rule; but on the other hand the good that is done is immense". Another man said, "The only bit of community life we have here is that we all live under the same roof and eat at the same table . . . If you ask permission for anything, Father Laval says not to waste his time. Things would not be so bad if only good Father Laval knew his rule a bit better". When Schwindenhammer heard the complaints of his former novices he remonstrated with Laval. His solution was that the missionaries should do less work; Laval's that the Superior-General should send out more men. Laval wrote, "Just as much as you do, we want to live the religious life and to be exact in keeping the rule and fulfilling our little exercises; we feel the necessity and perhaps more than others the need; we would be ready, if the salvation of souls would not be thereby compromised, to close ourselves up in our house of Holy Cross and give ourselves up to meditation and study, but the sick and the poor call for our help. However, to conform ourselves to your wishes, we will give up a part of our work".

Tension between work and prayer

Throughout his life, Laval suffered much from the tension between work and prayer which seems to be a necessary and inevitable part of missionary life. "In our ministry God gives us great consolations... Only my soul is dry and arid because of this storm of ministry which doesn't give us a moment of rest for ourselves and which requires of us that we be always busy with others". Like Peter he would have liked to remain on the Thabor of prayer but the cry of souls called him back to action. He looked back with nostalgia on his days in Pinterville when he had time for long days of prayer: he had drunk the good wine first; now he felt spiritually drained. He entered into a dark night where he felt in danger of damnation: the most painful sacrifice was to sacrifice one's soul for the salvation of other souls. When he wrote in this vein to Libermann he was not told to cut back on his work and to spend more time in prayer. Libermann told him instead to give himself to God in his work. We would say today that union with Christ cannot be separated from the obligations of one's state in Priests 'grow in the love of God and their neigbour by the daily exercise of their duty '(L.G. 41) and 'by their everyday sacred actions themselves, as by their entire ministry . . . they are being directed to perfection of life' (P.O. 12).

Unity of Life

Was Laval just another work-orientated missionary who preferred hearing confessions to saying his prayers? He suffered greatly from not having enough time for prayer, and this is itself a sign of his continual thirst for God. When, during the cholera epidemic he and his missionaries were busy from morning to night his letters show his continual union with God whom he met in prayer and in the service of the poor. Like Christ, when the people thronged him round, he had pity on them. Just as Christ would draw away to pray, so Laval did also. Just as Christ would leave his solitude when the people found him out, so Laval would also.

Every missionary needs a timetable of apostolic work and spiritual exercises; and by and large, throughout our lives the time-table will be valid, useful, even obligatory; but the time may come when the time-table will be law without spirit, when it will be a refuge for laziness rather than a spur for duty, when the priest will hurry swiftly past the man lying wounded on the road to Jericho because he wants to be back in time for his supper. In the final analysis the gyroscope of our lives cannot be any regulation or time-table; what unifies and gives purpose to our lives is our imitation of Christ, "whose meat it is to do the will of him who sent him, that he might perfect his work" (Jn, 4,34). As Laval said to one of his missionaries, it is by carrying his daily cross that a missionary is called to save his soul and those of others.

I/D 20

The Generalate Team

January 1979

POULLART DES PLACES:

The challenge of his tercentenary

On February 26 this year, we celebrate the tercentenary of the birth of our Founder, Claude POULLART DES PLACES. We shall come together not to commemorate the memory of a distant ancestor vaguely remembered but to renew our life and spirit through him. For, a founder lives on in his Institute to inspire and enliven it.

Life-influence

Claude was only a young seminarian of 24 when he established his Seminary for poor students. Ordained priest at 28, he was dead two years later. His two closest collaborators also died young: one at 25, the other at 30. Thus, Claude never had time to write a Rule nor even to complete the Regulations drawn up for his community. The few notes he left were mostly of a spiritual and personal nature and not intended for publication. Only the Seminary Regulation was in fact published.

We are rightly amazed that in a mere 6 years this young man could so inspire and so infuse his spirit into his foundation that it would come through the most difficult times of the 18th century without losing anything of the depth and vigour of its first fervour. The 1600 priests sent by the Spiritans to "lonely and abandoned outposts" in the years previous to the French Revolution is proof of this. It is also significant that the Spiritans were one of the few Congregations to survive that upheaval. This we attribute primarily to the life-witness of the founder.

More than the written word, Claude communicated to his sons a strength of life, a gift of youthfulness. His own short life is the "book" in which we can read for our encouragement and inspiration. He did not leave us a fully-organised institute but a spirit of vivid awareness of what it means to love the most abandoned. He did not offer us a ready-made Rule but a spirit that challenges us to think afresh in every age and circumstance.

Saints attract us because they are wholly possessed by God: nothing can stand in their way, nothing extinguish the apostolic fire that consumes them. Everyone hears them speak in his own tongue, in his own time: "Parthians, Medes, Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia and beyond"... from St. Pierre and Miquelon to Acadia, from the West Indies and Guyana, Paraguay and Pakistan. (Cf. Acts of Ap. J. 9). Their witness is truly Pentecostal

Ap. I, 9). Their witness is truly Pentecostal. This presence of the Holy Spirit in our founders offers a challenge to the youth of to-day, and to ourselves, as together we seek to discern the future. Claude POULLART DES PLACES offers us nothing but his own life for our

Samuel put that me is everything

It is encouraging also to know that though he had heard God call from his earliest years, Claude was not a saint from the beginning. He was sufficiently aware of the attractions of the world to turn a deaf ear for a long time. He was already 22 years of age before he could bring himself to submit and give himself entirely to God. Only at the end of a road that had been hard and slow did he see the light.

Everything led Claude at first to a life of ease and pleasure. Good-looking, intelligent, charming, rich and elegant, he was a universal favourite. His distinguished bearing, his brilliant conversation and wide knowledge were much admired. He was invited everywhere: to dinners and receptions, hunting parties and balls, the theatre and the Concert-hall. Claude would have been less than human not to yield to this adulation, these pleasures, as he did most fully.

Quite different were the other influences at work, that led ultimately to his decision to leave all that: some wise spiritual counsellors, a few retreats, reading "which nourished his soul", the love of an understanding family, the friendship of a Grignon de Montfort, of a Father Bellier and of some Jesuits... all these were together determining factors in the development of his vocation.

From this it is clear that Claude was more "modern" than might at first appear. Many young people to-day could recognise their own experience in his. Like him, they are torn between high ideals and earthly temptations; like him, they have their moments of deep fervour and their crises of discouragement. But, along the road of his spiritual adventure he advanced step by step to a final choice that was clear and irrevocable. He had scarcely done so when God swept him up to Himself. May it be our encouragement to remember that from that election of his, all our Spiritan vocation and life was to spring.

"I desired to love Him (God) alone, and out of love of Him I would have renounced the most legitimate attractions of this life. I wanted to be despoiled of everything some day, living only on alms, after giving everything away. Of all temporal goods I wanted to keep health alone and I wanted to offer the latter in a complete sacrifice to God in the work of the missions. I would have felt most happy if I could have shed the last drop of my blood for Him..." (Quoted by Fr Koren in his edition of The Spiritual Writings of Chaude I outlant Des Fraces, pages 15476).

Empty-handed: a prophetic vision

"There is in every beginning a power That can never be recaptured: Like the sun-rise, it has a strength, A newness and freshness that is unique." (Péguy)

To train the poor to evangelise the poor: this was the vision that seized POULLART DES PLACES and set his heart on fire. It was not just a matter of moral and intellectual preparation of seminarians. His originality lay in his having made the radical Gospel choice, in favour of the most neglected in the Church of his day. The miserable situation of many poor scholars was "one of the deepest wounds in the Church of France" at that time.

Although himself a fledgling cleric, just tonsured, Claude determined to found a seminary so that "the poor might be evangelised". He would accept only poor students who would live exclusively on alms. The theme of his first Retreat to them was: "The Lord sent me to evangelise the poor"... This undertaking was not intended to resolve the problem of seminaries but nonetheless it was to prove a prophetic challenge by reason of its spirit. With other gestures of a similar nature it would restore at least in part the credibility of the French clergy.

A prophet proclaims the ways of God to men by his actions and insights rather than his theories. His life is itself a parable: "the Kingdom of Heaven is like a rich man (Claude POULLART) who gave away all his riches..." The message of the prophet goes to the very heart of things, rising up out of current events, the cry of the people, with which the voice of God chooses to mingle itself. (Cf. Ex. 3.7)

The fervour of those first Spiritans was most impressive. Unfortunately, there remain only some "fioretti" of these times but enough to attract and encourage us to recapture their vision and live evangelically with total confidence in God, total commitment to the most abandoned. They challenge us in the depths of our being to restore again, with courage and simplicity, the morning freshness of our beginnings.

All was not clear to Claude from the first. Like the dawn it grew gradually to full glory, step by step with his own spiritual progress. As he became more severe with himself his faith grew more light-some and pointed the way to the poorest and most neglected.

The little chimney-boys of Paris were the first signs given him by God. When he became a tonsured cleric, he suddenly realised that some of his friends were as badly off as these miserable boys who climbed chimneys to earn a living and help their families. Out of the modest income allowed him by his father he decided to help some of these students secretly. At that stage there was no question of opening a house in which they could live. Later he would say: "In the beginning the intention was only to help to feed four or five poor scholars."

They taught him how to be poor and how to live poverty together. Quickly, he realised that he could not live for them unless he lived with them and so he decided to share their life in all things, "washing dishes, shopping, taking his turn to clean the shoes of the students." What he had undertaken as a passing charity had become a permanent commitment, his definitive vocation. The Community was officially established on Pentecost Sunday, 1703, to train poor students for the most difficult works: there were 12 poor scholars present.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace..." (Is, 52,7).

Soon the little group learnt to put all their trust in God: united in their common poverty, without other resources on which to live and develop than the alms they received, reliance on Providence became the foundation-stone of the new Community. One day, with 80 hungry boys to feed there would not be "an ounce of bread to feed them": they were so heavily in debt that the baker and the butcher cut off supplies until they were paid. On another day, "there was delivered from an unknown source such abundance of food that never before had the community had a better meal."

Out of this experience was born that total availability to God, of which later Libermann would love to speak, and also a preference for those works for which workers were difficult to find. It was a normal consequence of this ideal of spiritual poverty that the tiny band would feel themselves drawn to distant lands, frontier posts, and the missionary priorities of the Church. Already in his "Reflections on the Past", Claude had indicated that the missions were his first love. But, it was only with M. BOUIC and the first Rules that foreign missions would be given explicit mention. The Spiritans would go to wherever there was urgent need or special difficulty.

A former student of the Seminary, the De Montfort Father, Besnard, would write of them:

"One sees that under the guidance of their immediate superiors and at the first sign of their will... they constitute a kind of military detachment of auxiliary troops, ready to go anywhere there is work to be done for the salvation of souls. They consecrate themselves preferably to missionary activity both foreign and domestic, offering to go and stay in the poorest and most abandoned places for which it is especially difficult to find candidates. Whether it is a question of being exiled into the remote countryside or buried in the corner of a hospital, teaching in a college, lecturing in a seminary, directing a poor community, travelling to the farthest corners of the Kingdom (of France) or staying there in an austere post, whether it is a question even of crossing the seas and going to the very ends of the earth to gain a soul for Christ — their motto is: Behold we are ready to do Thy will: Ecce ego: mitte me". (Koren: p. 277.)

It could be a page from the Acts of the Apostles! There is a breath of freshness in this availability, this mobility, of our first members, in a time when no one yet talked of "internationality". Availability is the virtue of the poor and of the pilgrim. It is almost a condition of it not to belong to any particular local Church. Paul himself had no permanent resting-place. He went from mission to mission, sometimes for a few weeks, a few months, a year and a halt. He planted the Farm, founded

a community and made it responsible for spreading the Church: in Corinth, Antioch or elsewhere. Then be moved on and came back again only if they needed him. And yet in spite of this intensive rythym he knew each one "by his name", chose those who were to be in charge, made friends who were ready to lay down their lives for him. (Cf., Rom. 16.). The letters of Paul are not at all those of an "official visitor". None has ever succeeded as he did in maintaining equilibrium between human relationships and missionary mobility.

Missionary mobility is much stressed to-day. We have need to recapture the spirit of the Churches of Paul, which is never detrimental to the Church of Peter: rather, the contrary. Our Spiritan origins invite us to take up our staff and continue on our way in the same spirit, with the same generosity that urged them on.

Fountain-Heads of Spirituality

"All students should adore especially the Holy Spirit to whom they are consecrated. They should also have a special devotion to the Virgin Mary, under whose protection they were offered to the Holy Spirit." (- Opening lines of the Regulations of the Spiritan Community.)

If the sons of Poullart Des Places were known as Spiritans, this was not because their first house was dedicated to the Holy Spirit but because the 12 young men who were the first fruits of our great apostolic family were themselves consecrated to the Holy Spirit. Their spirituality would be wholly impregnated with devotion to the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary: this two-fold devotion would impress itself upon their private lives and public apostolate.

A Spiritan is one caught up by the Spirit, the very life-breath of God, blowing where He wills. To consecrate oneself to the Spirit is to accept that gently-whispered invitation which makes our whole being vibrate in harmony with what God wishes. It is the irresistible source of our apostolic availability. "Whence it comes, whither it goes none can tell". To be a Spiritan is to be open, available to the Spirit, wherever it carries us. Our Congregation will flourish as long as we do not attempt to harness that Wind for our own ends. Perhaps it will direct us to

Macedonia when we had planned on Asia Minor: or to the house of Cornelius when we thought we should not frequent it lest holy things be soiled in that contact. This was the Spirit which moved us in the first instance to the poorest works of the dioceses of France, then to the Indians in Acadia, the slaves in Guyana, the blacks of Senegambia and elsewhere...

It is only in the light of the Spirit that we can define what a Spiritan is. It is this special relationship to the Holy Spirit that distinguishes us. In consequence, at a time when the Spirit calls the whole Church to a radical renewal, should we not be the first to listen? More than others, more than ever. He must be be at the heart of our awakening and of our spiritual unity.

"Every family is unique, has its own particular spirit. That is to be found by us in the deep evangelical insight of our Founders as expressed in their lives, the spiritual and missionary adventure they wished to share with their brethren. Sometimes it may happen that we become so identified with the local Church that we forget that, as missionaries, we are bearers of an element of universality in our mission which overflows the limits of the local Church." — Fr TIMMERMANS.

A Call to Renewal

Rare though they are, the writings of our Founder reveal his spirit. Simple though they be, his confidences are from the heart and reveal his ardent temperament.

His "Reflections on the Past" is the most valuable insight given us of his "interior life". It brings to mind the "GOD IS ALL" of Libermann. The background of his early life is made of God's good pleasure, how to please Him at all costs. For this, God would lead Him into the desert and there speak to his heart (Cf, Os 2,16).

"I spent much time before the Blessed Sacrament. This was my happiest and most frequent recreation. I prayed most of the day and was upset as soon as I noticed I had lost, for a time, the presence of Him whom alone I wanted to love." (Koren, P. 135.)

Such a spiritual experience ranks high in the list of great riches that is our common patrimony. We can discern in the writings of Claude, "apart from the style which is of his own times, a spirit which does concern us all: his attitude to God and man, which across the centuries makes common cause with our present-day preoccupations. It is to be found throughout our Spiritan history, copacially in him

who was most profoundly marked by him, Fr Libermann". (Fr Lecuyer: Spiritan Papers No 3, page 3.)

Above all, we are a "community" that lives by faith in Christ and His universal mission. Our apostolate is based on this conviction. It is over and above all our discussions on The Mission: it should be more powerful than any of our immediate causes for concern. Our methods are called in question? The future of our works are in doubt? These invite us simply to show ourselves more clearly for what we are: witnesses of Christ, witnesses to his Death and Resurrection.

Our future depends on the confidence we have in the fundamental values of our missionary consecration. It depends on our belief in voluntary prayer; a belief sufficient for us to make adequate provision for it in our daily life; sufficient for us to make it the heart of all our apostolic endeavour. It depends also on our awareness that God calls us through the poor and that our prayer requires our commitment to Justice and Peace. It depends, finally, upon our belief in the apostolic creativity of our vows and of our fraternal communion that "the world may believe".

"What was implicit we now make explicit". (Libermann)

It should not be thought that POULLART DES PLACES founded a Congregation which, by chance as it were, joined up with that of Libermann. The truth is that fundamentally the charism of Claude and Francis was the same. There is great similarity between the end they proposed in their apostolate and the happenings of their lives.

Both shared and lived the same conviction of the Absoluteness of the Godhead; the power of Mary's help, the necessity of freedom of spirit and

of abandonment in the hands of God.

Where the Absoluteness of God is concerned, the many references to it made by Libermann are so well known that it is scarcely necessary to repeat them. Perhaps, those of Claude are less well known:

"My heart... wil no longer be occupied with anything except Yourself. Will there be one moment when I shall not lift my heart to You, ... consecrate to You all my thoughts..." (Koren, P. 57) "I beg You to grant me faith, humility, chastity, the grace of not doing, saying, thinking, seeing, hearing, or desiring anything except what You want me to do and to say." (Koren, 127.)

This conviction would in both bring great interior freedom from all that might impede their approach to God, especially pride. Though not yet priests both began something that nobody took seriously. Both

were victims of the smiles and taunts of "the wise". Libermann in Rome could have made his own the words of Claude: -

"Let others say what they please; let them approve me or make fun of me, treat me as a visionary, a hypocrite or a righteous man! All this henceforth must leave me indifferent" (Koren, P. 81). Or, "I despised myself, and others were often to know this, for I sometimes took pleasure in humiliating myself before them." (Koren, P. 135) Or again, "This is Your task, my God, to fight for me. I entrust myself entirely to You, for I know You always side with those who hope in You, and we have nothing to fear when we do our best and You sustain us." (Koren, 52/53)

Both Claude and Francis gave themselves heart and soul to the apostolate of the poor and most abandoned: both trained apostles for the missions: both made the Holy Spirit and the Holy Heart of Mary the living sources of the apostolate of their

respective Institutes.

"The union of our two societies has always seemed to me to be in accordance with God's Will. They were both intended for the same end and followed the same line. But, it is not in the plan of Providence to raise up two societies for a particular work, if one suffices." (Notes & Documents, X, p. 33).

LETTER OF POULLART DES PLACES TO THE SPIRITANS OF THE 20TH CENTURY:

My dear Confreres,

It was very kind of you to invite me to write a letter for the 300th anniversary of my birth: though, I must confess, I am not very much given to letterwriting and have never kept a single copy of a letter I wrote.

To me you are always my poor scholars of the Rue des Cordiers. That may perhaps displease you, for adults, of 276 years of age, dont like to be treated as children!

Life was simpler in my day: our needs were modest and we were content with the little we had. All beginnings require us to concentrate on the essentials. We had our difficulties, of course: we planned for a small group but our numbers grew so quickly that we had to look for another house: and, it was not always easy to get the food we needed. It was very much a journey into the unknown, an adventure in which events outran what we had planned. But, it was a wonderful experience, too, for we were utterly convinced that God walked with us on the way.

I did not realise all I had dreamt of but I have no regrets. God did not give me much time and when one begins a work one should not be in too great a hurry. The was of God are strange: the Holy Spirit reveals His hidden plan to His apostles and prophets only a little at a time (Cf. Eph. 3,5). I understood that God counted on you as much as on me to bring His revelation to fruition. The members of our Congregation are members of a living body: the Holy Spirit reveals to each what he must contribute to the common project. (Cf. I Cor 12,7)

I am full of admiration for what your missionary charity is achieving throughout the world. I would never have expected so much of the poor scholars of my day. And, behold you now in so many countries that it is only with difficulty I can trace where you are on the map.

To-day the poor have changed: the scholars too are different to those I knew in Paris. God be thanked

however that the same dream, the same ideal, inspires you. To-day, as in the past, there are many instances of injustice, oppression and need that cry out for your help: I pray those appeals will find in you a ready response. If you don't listen, there will be none to hear. It is of you God thinks when they turn to Him, as He thought of Moses when his oppressed people called out to Him in olden times.

You live in an age in which men are thrilled to discover the Holy Spirit. This is an opportunity you must not miss, for the Spirit was the source of our first love and it is not by chance we bear His Name. Out of the encounter of Mary and the Holy Spirit the Saviour of the world was born. That same dialogue of love must always be at the heart of our Spiritan vocation. In a world so concerned with the future, you may

In a world so concerned with the future, you may well ask what is the good of recalling the past. Still, it is not easy to forget where one was born: our hearts are always drawn back there. Believe me this is a good thing, for when in retrospect we find again our lost youth we are renewed in spirit and filled with longing to re-live that first adventure. Call me a romantic if you will, full of nostalgia for the past. I can only say that if I like to go back again to the Rue des Cordiers, it is not principally to find again the 18th century I so loved, but rather because it is something that lives on always in us. I go back as a loving son goes back to the mother who is the source of his being. I go back to the sources of our Spiritan life. Sources are always living, always fresh and new.

For all that, i won't hold it against you if you think all this the ramblings of an old man. Remember only: when we are old we live with our memories; and, even if one is 300 years old, it is good to dream. Sometimes too, dreams of the past are the stuff of new visions of the future to those who strive to

keep eternally young. Yours fraternally,

Claude

One Heart and one Soul

"Do the Spiritans still want Brothers? If so, for what Mission do they want them?"

This question was asked by one of the Brothers at the Aranda meeting. This Brother was 45 years old and was the spokesman for about ten young Brothers who were at the meeting with him.

The question is asked of us, — but it is also a question for all the clerical institutes which have Brothers as members. They are all in danger of seeing the presence of these religious men in their midst diminish at first, and then disappear altogether. It will happen, unless the "clerical" members undergo the necessary conversion. A Brother must receive full recognition in his religious family and find a genuine place there.

As Spiritans, we are at a critical threshold in the Congregation as a whole. Only three or four Provinces still have vocations to the Brothers and are preparing them according to contemporary methods. The other Provinces have, at best, one or other isolated candidate, — or none at all. The longer this goes on, and the Brothers already with us grow older, the less hope there is of attracting young men to join an aging group.

That is why we are sounding the alarm! If we make only vague resolutions, the Spiritan consecrated layman will disappear. We will

become a congregation of clerics and be very much the poorer both in our life and in our mission. And that at the precise moment when we are living in an age of renewal of the laity. In such an age, it is a great good fortune for an institute to have consecrated laymen among its members. It is a great advantage for the Mission at a time when priests and laymen are being called to work together more and therefore have more need of one another than ever before. If the Mission "has a new image", should not the Brothers also have a new image?

If the Brothers were to disappear, it would be a serious loss to the very life of the Congregation. We now have about 500 Brothers. Ever since the Congregation began, everybody has borne witness to the depth of their religious life. They have made an irreplaceable contribution to Spiritan life.

Once more we are called to conversion so that we may renew the Congregation and its Mission and live our Spiritan Life better.

Let's be clear about it: the presence of the Brothers is something which goes right to the heart of our Spiritan existence: WHO ARE WE? It is a question which tests our motto: "ONE HEART AND ONE SOUL" (Acts 4: 32). If that motto is an evangelical ideal for any Christian community, how much more is it so for a religious community!

Let's learn to I

"Happy to be a Brother"

"I cannot really see how the Brothers of the future will evolve. I am quite happy with our present status. There is complete harmony between priests and brothers. A brother's life in the present climate of the world is difficult as indeed is that of the priest and it is not easy to attract people to our way of life. I am only too well aware of the good work we can do and are doing." (An Irish Brother, 50 years old).

"My own reason for becoming a Brother and for continuing to be one is that it gives me a chance to fulfill my desire to help those who need us. I can help them very effectively through my apostolate as a Brother with technical training. I can help the most abandoned in their professional development as Christians. I can help the poorest to develop as human beings and to become better able to surmount the hardships of their life. However, in the documents about the Brothers, you should give enough importance to the value of their apostolate through their technical and professional training." (A Brazilian Brother, 28 years old).

"I remained because I was able to feel fulfilled in my work in Africa... I'm organizing a small productions workshop for young men from very deprived and disturbed backgrounds. I'm just another member of the group. I organize, manage, design and instruct. We manufacture joinery and furniture products at present and may extend into other fields later. I would like to get other Christians to help and extend the scheme to other areas of the city." (An Irish Brother in Gambia, 38 years old).

"What sustained me in my vocation was the witness to the primacy of spiritual values in religious life... We accepted many aspects in our Religious life in our early years without much questioning... in this more enlightened modern age, many wonderful things have evolved in recent years, and I am so grateful for them and to be living in this age of challenge. We must now question in an open and sincere manner, and thus equip ourselves better to face the new demands made on us today." (An Irish Brother, 57 years old).

Different kinds of service

"The fulfilment (of our Brotherhood) is possible if we look upon all of us as missionaries. No one is the servant of un, body else. We are recognized,

esteemed, loved, for what we are, not for some particular work we do. There are different kinds of service: priestly ministry and other ministries. Particular kinds of service should not 'label' persons. We think the Congregation will have a future if it can transcend the titles of 'Fathers' and 'Brothers'. Let us all be recognized first of all as 'Spiritans'". (A Portuguese Brother, 32 years old).

"... The developments in the Congregation over the past ten years are a matter of great satisfaction to me: we are all one family. But I believe that, if we could learn to listen more to what the Brothers are thinking, things would go even better and we would not lack vocations to the Brotherhood. One thing which has always offended the Brothers is paternalism. The Brother is a religious-missionary, but we do not realize clearly enough that he is a missionary. He is not given enough professional and apostolic training. In this area, Sisters and laymen are well trained. Often the Brothers are much less so. It is not attractive to be limited to household tasks; we can pay other people to do them. The Spiritan family is made up of Fathers and Brothers. It is important that they work together, in true community." (A Portuguese Brother, 58 years old).

Where formation is concerned

Spain, France and Portugal have drawn the conclusions inherent in this real brotherliness, and applied them to formation:

"The Province of Spain, in its DIRECTORY, has tried from the start to open the way for there to be only one category of Spiritans. The results have been good.

Recruitment is the same for all. Candidates who have not had a basic formation receive it in one of our houses. Then they are given the specifically Spiritan formation, including the novitiate. Finally comes their specialized formation according to personal aptitudes and the needs of the Mission. In line with this, three of our scholastics are doing technical studies in Health Care, while the others are studying theology. This does not mean that we consider the first three "Brothers"; neither do they look at it that way.

There are three of us 'Brothers' of the Province who received the old-style formation. One of us works in the missions and two of us in the Province. Personally, I am fully integrated into the work of the Province and I don't feel the need to wonder whether I am a Brother or not." (A Spanish Brother, 44 years old).

O THE BROTHERS

ey have something to say to us.

What of to-morow?

"I think the whole question of Brothers in the Congregation (I can only speak for Ireland) should be examined, as to whether we should continue to recruit or let them, like old soldiers, fade away! In other words, are Brothers really needed today in the Congregation, have they a part to play, — food for thought, there is no doubt." (An Irish Brother, age not given).

"I think if we are serous about Brothers in looking for vocations, there should be a Brother on vocations, at least as an experiment." (An Irish Brother, 39 years old).

The "other things Jesus did"

"Seven years before I entered the novitiate, when I was in the third year of medical school, I took private vows. Up until the end of my studies I was tempted to commit myself to the service of the Church as a priest and several times I almost entered the seminary. My family was always against it and told me I should first make sure I had qualified in a profession. I followed their advice. The outcome is that I am finding in my work in Africa as a doctor more than I ever dared to hope for. Meantime, I saw all around me any number of priests going through crises...

"When I entered the novitiate, I was ready for anything, but I had a feeling that my profession as a doctor ought to have a place in my commitment as a religious. During the novitiate, nobody imposed the idea of the priesthood upon me. In fact, it was in dialogue with my Superiors that I came to understand that the Lord was calling me to serve Him as a religious-missionary bringing the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ through relieving the sufferings of the poor. At the time I did not know what a "Spiritan Brother" was; I only knew that, at least for the moment, I did not want to be a priest, and that in spite of some unconscuous pressure from some of my confreres and from many nuns. It was only at the meeting in Spain that I "found out" that I was a Brother. It made me very happy. I want to remain a Brother and I feel completely at ease with my confreres who are priests.

"It is true that the range of a Brothr's work can go all the way from a so-called "material trade" to a completely pastoral activity, but I see my place as a Brother as a complement to that of the Father. The Father is more exclusively given over to the service of the Word of God and he has received the charism to interpret it with authority. He is also in the service of the Breaking of Bread in the community. The Brother is rather the incarnation of those "other things that Jesus did". This is perhaps only one man's way of looking at things and some priests may be miffed at seeing themselves "relegated" to

the purely spiritual; but what I am saying is not absolute, — it lends itself to all sorts of nuances around its central meaning.

"What I like about our status as Brothers is the simplicity of our commitment. It allows us to be very close to lay people and to remind them that they are called to holiness just as much as we are. What distinguishes us from them is our official commitment to the Church and our way of understanding and living poverty." (A Belgian Brother who is also a medical doctor, 31 years old).

Chevilly: the concrete experience of one group

For a few years now in Chevilly (France) a group of Brothers – both young ones and some not so young – have been conducting a study and an experiment. Jean-Pierre DELSARTE, a French Brother, 38 years old, told the 1978 Enlarged Council about what his community is doing.

"... We had had enough of the old "anticlericalism", enough of criticizing Chapter texts... We wanted to see WHAT LIFE HAD TO SAY. We tried to realize and to demonstrate that we were men, Christians following a definite call within a particular Institute. We wanted to be wholly Religious-Missionaries.

"So for three years we placed ourselves at the service of a large community, that of Chevilly. We formed a small group within that big community, but that was not without its problems. The older men took a dim view of the fact that the "younger Brothers" were living separately. One Father was astonished that a Brother could have the moral responsibility for the group! There were problems too with some of our group who wanted to live as consecrated laymen, - but outside Chevilly. Our difficulties were solved when we took on a common project: the renovation of Chevilly to provide suitable quarters for our retired confreres and also for housing the groups which were coming in ever greater numbers. This gave us a chance to work professionally along with other workmen on the job, and also to be hosts to various groups, to give witness of our religious and missionary life to people who spent a few days with us. Thanks to our professional life, our apostolic life and our prayer life, we stayed together. Three of our Brothers have chosen to do their novitiate within our group . . .

At the end of their report to the 1978 Enlarged Council, this Chevilly group of Brothers asked the whole Congregation this question:

"Does the Spiritan Congregation today want Spiritans who are not priests and who exercise a ministry different from the priestly ministry?

"If it does, what steps is it going to take to arrive at a recognition of the several different ways of "being a Spiritan"?

"YES" TO THE BROTHERS

To the question: "Does the Congregation still want Brothers?" the Generalate Team answers without hesitation: Yes!

Yes, because we want to be loyal to all the Brothers who, today as in the past, have committed their lives

to the Congregation.

Yes, even more so because of the Spiritan community. Every Brother is one of God's gifts to the Congregation. By reason of his person, because of what he is, because of his life as a religious, he is a gift to the community, helping us to live together our common vocation within

the Mission of the Church.

Yes, still more because of the Mission. Today, and even more tomorrow, laymen are an integral part of evangelization. Vatican II said this very clearly. Their function, which is important in the human community, will be equally important in the Christian community. It is through them that the Gospel will get deep down into the lives, the cultures, the structures of society; through them also "Justice and Peace" will gain its full stature. Thanks to this renewal of the role of lay people, evangelization will have a new upsurge, - and even more so, by renewal of consecrated laymen. By making religious profession the consecrated layman gives himself totally to God and His service within the project of the Institute. He consecrates himself totally to the proper and irreplaceable vocation of the layman in the Mission.

The Mission is the work of everybody, priests and lay people. It is a fortunate religious-missionary Institute that counts both priests and lay people among its members. This renews its missionary vision and is a sign of the fact that the Mission is accomplished by priests and laymen in the diversity and complementarity of their ministries. If they are not conscious of the necessity for them to collaborate in the service of the same Gospel. neither group will renew the Church and the Mission. That is what is at stake for our Congregation today.

We are challenged

Our affirmative answer entails for all Spiritans a new way of looking at the consecrated layman. By that very fact, it entails many changes. So many Institutes refuse to make them and disappear because they do not move with the new currents and accept the required conversion! From this very point of view, the consecrated layman is a challenge to us.

First, we must be converted

The most important conversion we need - and it is much more far-reaching than just our choice in favour of consecrated laymen - is to become genuinely conscious of our "being Spiritan". When will we get over our habit of looking at ourselves and defining ourselves as "Father" or "Brother"? By religious profession and according to our common vocation we are all RELIGIOUS MISSIONARIES! We are all consecrated to God and His service. Called in the Church and for her Mission, we ALL follow a common vocation. That is the very foundation of our fraternal community in which we are all "brothers"; it is the very foundation of our unity, of our rights and obligations - the same for all.

Conversion would mean this: Father or Brother, our particular service can no longer be the point of reference which divides us into classes and thereby determines our powers and our duties. As Spiritans we are religious missionaries and we live out that common call in DIVERSITY according to our mission

"There are different services and in the Church. ministries, but all are for the common good." I Cor. 12). The priest has a service to render which is irreplaceable. So has the Brother. They are complementary to one another. Our conversion is the sincere recognition of THE PROPER AND IRREPLACEABLE VOCATION OF THE BROTHER.

But, a Brother for what Mission?

No one will be surprised if we do not have a ready and irrefutable answer. We are only at the dawn of a new missionary epoch, as Paul VI said. The same is true of the new mission of the laity

and of the consecrated layman.

It is possible, however, to point out a few paths. When the Brother gives himself totally to God and His service according to our common vocation, he is a witness to the Gospel. He lives that witness in various services and ministries within the human and Christian community. When he exercises his profession, he gives it an apostolic dimension. means of his profession he can gain access to places where the Gospel cannot enter, in countries where the political regime excludes a direct apostolate. There are countries where, by means of international work-teams, only Brothers could gain admission, provided they are highly qualified professionally.

In addition, the Brother's profession, human though it be, has in itself an apostolic value. This is true in the domain of education, of development, of health . . . admittedly, some professions have this apostolic orientation more than others. But there is a more important element: the living these diverse ministries as a team, a fraternal community, Fathers and Brothers, in order to witness to Christ and His

Mission.

What needs to be changed?

This kind of a perspective presupposes an evolution away from our present "clerical" status. However, the current situation - of the reform of Canon Law makes it imprudent, to say the least, to ask for a change of status. If there are situations in which Canon Law in its present state hinders us from practising equality between Fathers and Brothers as we ought to and as our two most recent General Chapters explicitly wished, we know that we can get whatever exceptional permissions are needed (such permissions have already been obtained).

There are many changes which only depend upon ourselves; e.g. a more demanding formation on both the professional and the theological level according to each one's capabilities. In some Provinces there is already a part of formation which is common to all candidates to the Spiritan life. Only afterwards should there be diversification in view either of further professional education or of the priestly

ministry.

And then, above and beyond the exigencies of formation, we can change many a local habit in our communities, and, first of all, in our way of thinking, so that all of us, religious missionaries, will be truly "BROTHERS".

OUR SPIRITAN LIFE

A pre-capitular document from the General Council

Congregazione dello Spirito Santo - 195, Clivo di Cinna - 00136 Roma (Italia)

The General Council has prepared this document as a WORKING TOOL in the preparation of our next General Chapter. All the ideas and all the questions it contains are concerned with our Spiritan Life. We want to treat that Spiritan Life in the Chapter, to evaluate before God its quality, its genuineness, its apostolic worth. We want to see if we can improve it.

This paper has a long history. It draws a picture of the Congregation as we have seen it during our five years of service. It is above all a reflection of the experience of the General Council members, — an experience built up slowly by means of visits, meetings, talks with you, study of situations on the spot and reports which we have received. For a long time now we have made it a habit to discuss these experiences together, to analyze them, to compare them. This gives us a certain overall view of what is going on in the Congregation today, of its way of evolving, of the directions it is taking, — all this within the context of the missionary Church, of today's world.

Yes, it is a matter of experience. What we are presenting here is in no way a treatise on missionary theology, nor a theory developed in an ivory tower. This is the REAL LIFE of the Congregation as we have witnessed it from within, as we have come to understand it with your help, with all its lights and shadows. It is your work too, since it is the fruit of our dialogue with you during our meetings over the past five years.

We really began to trace its broad outlines two years ago. As we continued our visits, the picture was filled in, often corrected in passing from one edition to the next. Its current presentation too is only one more step: provisory, incomplete, perhaps inexact, certainly in need of correction. We place it before you for what it is worth, with no pretense that is is anything more than our contribution to the Chapter preparation going on throughout the Congregation. It represents the common view of your brethren on the General Council and is intended as a point of departure for your reflection. We hope it will provoke reactions from you and lead you to discuss it in community. It is the offspring of our dialogue with you and, we hope, will be a means of continuing and intensifying that dialogue. With this in mind, we ask you, wherever you may be, to express yourself, to analyze the various points, to arrive at a consensus as to what Spiritan Life means to you today, how it has to be interpreted in the context in which we live, in what direction the General Chapter should point the Congregation for the next six years. We hope the questions will help you to do this. Of course, you are free to ask others and to formulate your reply to them.

Several confreres, upon our request, have collaborated in the formulation of the text, as well as in drawing up the questions.

There are seven sections. They deal with the principal aspects of our Spiritan Life which the Chapter will have to study.

Each section begins with a presentation of the situation as we see it: facts we have observed, tendencies we have distinguished, key ideas which seem to have an important influence.

Then come some orientations, — the guidelines which we are actually placing before the Congregation.

Finally, there are the questions. They are of three types:

- attitudinal: how do you feel about the issue under discussion?
- behavioral: what are you actually doing about it at this time?
- directional: what do you think the General Chapter should do in relation to it?

It is our fervent hope that this document may help you in your group discussions: by community, by region, by Province or District. When you send us the results of your work, please indicate the areas in which you reached agreement and those in which you did not.

It has been said that the General Chapter should be a CELEBRATION. We hope it will be so: a step towards conversion, towards humble openness to listen to the Word of God in our lives, towards the discerning of his Will for us and for our community; an act of thanksgiving too: an awakening of creativity to lead us into a new future, open to the world and the Church.

This would be a great grace for us. May the Lord grant it in his goodness. With this in view, let us place ourselves in the best of dispositions. All the work we do in common discussion can help us to get our dispositions right.

May we hope that even this preparatory effort will be for every community a celebration in joy and thankfulness? a celebration of the Spiritan Life as we live it and as we want to live it: a missionary life, filled with God, totally self-giving, richly fruitful for the building up of the Universal Church.

Frans Timmermans, C.S.Sp. Superior General

P.S. - So that we may be able to put together the results of your reflections and share them with all the delegates in good time before the Chapter, we ask you to send them to Rome by post no later than December 1, 1979.

0.0 Introduction

"We have been gathered together by Christ into a Fraternal Community . . . " (G.A., 24)

O.1 Above all else, the Congregation is a Fraternal Community gathered together by Christ in the same religious-missionary vocation, but with a diversity of ministries.

We believe that the "Day of the Lord" for our Congregation is the call to renewal of our Spiritan Life. It is upon our response to that invitation that our future depends.

Various signs, considerations and experiences have brought us to this conviction. It is a conviction which leads us to place special emphasis upon renewal of our:

- spiritual and religious life in general
- community and prayer in particular
- common inspiration and common project.
- 0.2 What do confreres understand by the RENEWAL of the Congregation? We in the General Council think of two important points. An important constituent of renewal we think is the interior acceptance of the theology of the Second Vatican Council. More basic, however, is the putting off of the old man of sin and a putting on of the new man, who has been created according to God in justice and holiness of truth (cf. Eph. 4: 21-24). Each one is called to individual conversion. The Congregation as a whole, and each of its constituent communities is also called to this repentance and conversion.

Both elements are, we think, essential for the renewal of the Congregation. We can be up-to-date in our theology and still need spiritual conversion. And, as Pope John Paul said recently, a Christian today must accept the Church of today.

In some Spiritan communities there are still conflicts and tensions arising in major part from the difficulties in adjustment to the changes in the Church (cf. G.A., pp. 23-24).

0.3 Some Questions for Reflection:

- 1. How do you see renewal in your personal life, and in the life of the Spiritan community?
- 2. Are you satisfied that you, or your Spiritan community, has a sufficient understanding of the teaching of Vatican II?

If not, what measures should be taken to remedy this deficiency?

- 3. Do you find an atmosphere of apathy or a real desire for life renewal and growth in your circumscription?
- 4. What would you identify as the major obstacle to renewal in your circumscription?
- 5. Do you find renewal and growth to be hindered by any tendency to take refuge in fixed positions?
- 6. Are those who desire renewal successful in overcoming the inertia of the group, if such inertia exists?
- 7. If such inertia exists, is it the norm or the exception?
- 8. Have you initiated any communitarian processes which stress inter-dependency and collaboration and facilitate growth in our Spiritan Life?
 What are they?
- 9. How do you evaluate the success of these processes so far?
- 10. Have the confreres succeeded in arriving at a style of interaction which avoids the two extremes of:
 - the excessive fear of offending the opinions of others which leads to the paralysis of action?
 - the inability to collaborate because of a pervasive "there's only one way to do things" attitude or a lack of mutual respect?
- 11. What steps do you feel the General Chapter should take in facilitating the renewal of Spiritan Life in the Congregation at large?

CHARISM

1.0

Background:

The Church is insisting upon the primacy of life-witness as a means of evangelization: "... Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers... for the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life." (Evang. Nunt., no. 41; cf. also nos. 15, 21, 74, 75).

In the young Churches, the Bishops are asking us specifically to give witness by way of our religious life.

Nowadays, religious institutes are talking about their desire: to deepen further their interior life; to bring about a really fraternal community; to gain a clearer recognition of their own identity and charism (cf. Cardinal Pironio's article on Chapters).

Today's and tomorrow's Mission present several reasons for demanding that the missionary be a "man of God" and a "man taken hold of by the Spirit". (cf. Paul VI's talk for Mission Sunday, October 1977). It is especially important, therefore, that we grow in a deeper appreciation of our charism as members of a Congregation consecrated to God the Holy Spirit under the tutelage of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

There are certain situations today which cause us to question ourselves as a Congregation. Within the Church there exists a certain ambiguity as regards the meaning of the word "religious" as well as a difficulty in appreciating the specific witness of a religious in the active apostolic life. Religious missionaries are in danger of being drawn into an all-consuming activity which plays havoc with community and prayer life. The all-too-numerous laicizations in the past years cause us to question the quality of our religious community life and raise the question as to whether the focus of our attempts at renewal has been properly placed.

In our Congregation, as in many others, there is a tendency to go back to the sources of our inspiration: our Founders, our spiritual heritage, our history, etc. (never forgetting, of course, that the primordial source of our inspiration is the Gospel), re-interpreting those sources in the context of today. It is precisely this re-interpretation which concerns us all through this document. We feel that a correct understanding of charism is a key to our genuine renewal.

Charism is the Unifying/Integrating Force (Grace) of Spiritan Life

- What does God want the Congregation to do today?
- What does the Church want the Congregation to do today?

Paratus ad omnia in manu Superiorum, — Yes, but God is the final Superior, and He gives his gifts and charisms every day to individuals and congregations. The charism of the Congregation is not something that Libermann locked away somewhere in the Mother-house where it is gathering dust until we find it again; we have it now, it is one of God's gifts, it is what God is drawing us to now, today. He manifests his will to us through the Church and through circumstances and pours out his charisms abundantly upon the Congregation which is listening in humility and repentance.

Charisms are not things we have principally to interpret, or study, or agonize over historically (that could become a pharisaical burden). They are graces given today to the Spiritan Community when that Community is joined together in continuous paryer as were the Apostles and the Mother of Jesus at Pentecost. The Spiritan charism makes us run freely in the way of God's commandments and is a gift of God which cannot be turned into an instrument for the condemnation of others.

The missionary is sometimes inclined, even unconsciously, to impose his own culture and even the ecclesiology of his culture on the church where he is working. If he is working within a church of his own culture, he should help to modicte the values of the universal Church within it and help it to keep from closing in upon it self. When he works within a church of a culture other than his own, he should be fully engaged in its work but

should not claim there full rights of citizenship: here also he should help to remind the local Church of its communion with the Church universal. An international missionary congregation is an instrument, a symbol of the universal Church and is the place where the Spiritan lives this universality.

The ways we are responding to the needs and appeals of the present moment are signs of a renewal of heart. They could be enough to keep us busy for many years to come. We might say with the man in the Gospel: «Your barns are full; give rest to your soul". Still, in line with the words of Isaiah ("Widen the space of your tent, stretch out your coverings freely"), we must go farther and

a) be a part of the new missionary epoch which is beginning to appear, and

b) orientate and renew the Congregation accordingly.

1.2 Orientations:

a) We do not claim, nor do we feel anyone can claim, to have the last word to say on our charism. If it is a special grace given continuously to a Congregation, then only the Holy Spirit has the final word to say on it. We on our part must look for it not only in the lives of our Founders, in our Providential history and in the needs and appeals of the times, but also, and most importantly, in the enlightenment that can come from our prayerful openness to the activity of the Spirit in our past and present experiences as a community of men consecrated to the Holy Spirit and seeking to be followers of the "Spirit-filled Messiah". We, therefore, call upon all members and communities to give attention to the spiritual dimensions of our life which can foster openness to the activity of the Spirit.

b) The attempt to steer in this fundamental direction will be a failure unless there can be developed in the great body of confreres a common agreement that this is an important option for the Congregation.

As a means of arriving at that common agreement, we ask Superiors at every level to animate each community to examine itself with regard to this priority of priorities and to try to arrive at a suitable response.

c) A very essential part of our Spiritan charism is our fidelity to the religious life. A Spiritan community cannot prayerfully reflect on its conversion and renewal if it does not allow itself to be put into question as to how it lives its poverty, its consecrated celibacy and its obedience.

1.3 Some Questions for Reflection:

- 12. What is the degree of your conviction that arriving at a clear and common understanding of our charism as Spiritans is the key to the renewal of our Spiritan Life our way of living?
- 13. For you, what is the difference between the witness of a religious in the apostolic life and the witness of others serving in the apostolate?
- 14. What is your understanding of the phrase "Charism is a special grace given an individual or group for the building up of the Body of Christ?" (cf. I Cor. 12).
- 15. If we understand the name of our Congregation to be a sign-post of our charism, what would you draw from our name (Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the Immaculate Heart of Mary) by way of characteristics of our life as Spiritans?
- 16. What does it mean to be "a man taken hold of by the Spirit?" to "walk in the breath of the Spirit?" (cf. Paul VI's talk for Mission Sunday 1977).
- 17. Are you making any attempts to get in touch with the sources of our inspiration (the Gospels, our Founders, our spiritual heritage, our Providential history) and re-interpret them in the context of today's world? How far have your attempts gotten? What are your conclusions?
- 18. How can you improve your personal witness to poverty and how can this witness to poverty be improved in the Spiritan community?
- 19. Is the way you live your celibacy a witness to gospel values?
- 20. How do you see the importance of religious obedience in your personal life and in the life of the Spiritan community?

OUR LIFE IN COMMUNITY

"May they be so completely one that the world will realize that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me." (John 17, 23).

"In view of perfecting the apostolic life which is its purpose, for stabilizing and extending its works, as well as for the sanctification of its members, the Congregation has taken the common life as its fundamental rule. All the members must always live in community." (Libermann, Rule of 1849, no. 45).

"The mission is the end, but religious life in community is the condition 'sine qua non'." (Libermann, N.D., X, 454).

Background:

In General:

- a) Today's pastoral activity in Africa and in Latin America (establishing Christian communities and training lay leaders) requires the witness of community life among apostolic workers and requires team work. We must model what we seek to communicate.
- b) The trials of the missionary during a period of transition from one missionary epoch to another mean that he needs more than ever the combined effort and the support of his brothers.
- c) Religious institutes in general are trying to arrive at genuine fraternal community in these times of rapid change.
- d) Young people are choosing those institutes which can fulfill their deep need for community living and for sharing at every level of existence.

In our congregation in particular:

- a) Most of our Provinces and Districts are placing strong emphasis upon community life.
- b) Regional communities are developing and are examining the Spiritan Life.
- c/ There are more and more Spiritan communities opening themselves up to other people. More confreres are "making community" also with non-Spiritans or other apostolic workers.
- d) In some circumscriptions an effort is being made towards renewal of the life and role in the community of the consecrated laymen.

Life Style and Diversity:

Father Arrupe (Superior General of the Jesuits) recently expressed how he foresees the future changes in the community life of religious institutes:

"Community life will continue in the future to be the distinctive sign of religious life, even though it may find different expressions in different institutes. It will manifest itself in a deeper and more apostolic manner by way of more interpersonal relations in prayer, in apostolic planning, with the conviction that this way of life should not lead to introversion but rather to the promotion of the spiritual and active life proper to the institute. Community life will be more open, losing something of its aspect of reserve and mystery. As a consequence, the contacts made in the apostolate will call for greater openness, and that openness will in turn call for a life-style which really is a witness. These same contacts with souls will call for a change in the life-style of a large community which can become too closed upon itself and really isolated. It may be necessary to diminish the size of such a community so that it can become a leaven among the people of God by way of its way of living together and of taking a part in the "real life" around it.

"We shall have to devise new forms of genuinely community life, taking as a criterion great capacity for adapta-

tion. This will permit a fruitful pluralism within the institute." (Montreal, november 1977).

Our Congregation has its place in this general picture of institutes undergoing change, with their eyes toward the future, allowing themselves to be challenged by the new exigencies of our time.

We are tending towards:

- a) Spiritan communities which are thought of as "privileged places of evangelization both for the community itself and in view of apostolic ministry." (cf. 1978 Enlarged Council and Evang. Nunt., no. 15). More importance will be attached here to interpersonal relations and to integral sharing in community life and apostolate.
- b) Regional communities which will, in their meetings, stress fraternal encounter, prayer in common, shared study of Spiritan concerns, recreation together. Confreres who live alone or with one or two confreres will be members of a regional community.
- c) Communities which are open and "welcoming"; open also in the sense of close relationship with the local clergy, community, both lay and clerical.
- d) Communities which, in some instances, have extended themselves to include members of non-Spiritan communities or other apostolis workers.

2.2 Orientations:

- a) The directive of the Founder cited abode always holds for the Congregation, yesterday and today. Living in community should be considered the "normal situation" for Spiritans (Fr. Timmermans to the 1976 Enlarged Council).
- b) We say "Put a stop to dispersion!" We recommend the formation of communities wherever possible (i.e. where confreres can live together) and, in setting up small communities, to prefer three rather than only two confreres so that the communities may not be too fragile. We must take another look at the arguments brought forward in favor of dispersion of men because of the pressures of pastoral appeals. They should be examined in the light of new pastoral methods, the signs of the times, and the ways in which our missionary commitments have changed.

(This directive takes into account individual cases (of isolated confreres) which are a legacy from the past and which for various reasons cannot be changed unless the confrere concerned expresses a desire to live in community. Even in such cases, every Spiritan should at least belong to an enlarged or regional community).

- c) Every Spiritan, when appointments or changes are being made, has the right to ask to live in community. Persons should not be sacrificed to pastoral needs.
- d) Following the decision of the 1978 Enlarged Council, we ask Superiors at every level to make great efforts to maintain and promote community life and team work.
- e) Taking into account the diversity of membership in which "the elderly" and "the younger" live together, community life-style is to be decided upon by the members themselves in mutual respect.

2.3 Some Questions for Reflection:

- 21. What is your understanding of community life?
- 22. What do you feel are the realistic expectations that we should have of our life in a religious-missionary community?
- 23. The Enlarged Council has drawn attention to the importance that the Church gives to community as a privileged place of evangelization both for the community itself and in view of the apostolic ministry. How do you think that community life is related to our two-fold evangelical endeavors?
- 24. What do you feel is the quality of your community life at present: a) in your local community? b) in your larger Spiritan circumscription?
- 25. How open and "welcoming" is your community to Spiritans of any community or circumscription and to local clergy, other apostolic workers, laity, etc.?
- 26. What efforts have been made by your circumscription to renew its corporate understanding of community?
- 27. Has your circumscription developed structures to foster regional communities which embrace several local communities and provide community for members who by the nature of their ministry do not live in a local Spiritan community?
 If so, how effective are they in providing the opportunity for fraternal encounter, prayer in common, shared study of Spiritan concerns and recreation together?
- 28. Have you attempted different styles of community life in your circumscription? Describe them. What were the strengths and weaknesses of each?
- 29. Do you feel that the General Chapter should establish any additional goals and directives about the community dimension of our Spiritan Life? If so, what should they be?

PRAYER

"All these joined in continuous prayer . . ." (Acts 1:14).

Prayer, both individual and in common, is the most effective way towards spiritual and religious renewal. "... to pray continually and never lose heart." (Luke 18:1).

For some of Libermann's reflections on prayer, cf. I/D 16, 17, 18.

Common Prayer:

For some years now there has been an evident renewal of community prayer, especially in the communal celebration of the Church's Morning and Evening Prayer. This is true both of the smaller communities of two or three confreres and of the larger communities.

More especially in the Districts praying communities tend to open themselves up to include all those who help in our work of evangelizing, whether they be men religious, sisters, or lay-leaders or other lay people.

Many confreres, especially younger confreres, like to participate in a form of common prayer in which they reflect on day-to-day reality of their lives and share together the faith which motivates their actions.

In several circumscriptions there are praying communities which are becoming real centers of spirituality where religious and lay people come together to seek a better knowledge of God and of the work He wishes them to do.

A community which prays and is seen and felt to be a praying community attracts young people to join its life. John's disciples were attracted to Jesus and asked him, "Where do you live?" "Come and see," he replied. "So they went and saw where he lived and stayed with him the rest of the day." (John 1:39).

In many regional and local communities common participation in a community Eucharist has become the high point of their celebration of community. The Eucharist is indeed 'the sign of unity and the bond of charity' in such communities. In some larger communities, however, there is rarely a community celebration because some priest-confreres have a pastoral commitment to celebrate the Eucharist in other communities while others celebrate the Eucharist privately. (cf. C.D.D., 136 b).

We are tending towards diverse forms of praying communities:

- purely Spiritan praying communities;
- praying communities which are open to some other persons;
- praying communities which extend themselves to include our apostolic co-workers and the people to whom we minister:
- giversity in the manner of integrating more or ferver elements from more contemporary styles of prayer.

3.2 Personal Prayer:

What each Spiritan brings to his community prayer or to his participation in prayer-groups depends upon his fidelity to the practice of personal prayer and on the quality of his prayer, which in turn is nourished by his meditation on the Word of God and his prayerful reading of the Fathers and other masters of the spiritual life. The occasional sharing of his experiences in prayer with another confrere can also help his personal prayer life.

3.3 Orientations:

The essential thing is to pray, individually and in community. The great missionaries were men of prayer even while keeping to a killing work schedule. When apostolic activity militates against prayer and leaves no time for it, it works harm in the long run both to persons and to the ministry.

It is no longer possible to have a uniform style of common prayer like we used to have. There is, however, the framework provided by the official prayer of the Church and this permits, within its rubrics, the integration of newer elements as desired.

We would like to think that it is possible to tend towards a more typically Spiritan form of prayer. Careful study of Libermann's "practical union" ought to be of great help in achieving the desired integration of the various dimensions of our Spiritan Life (thus avoiding the two extremes of the spiritual recluse who has no interest in the problems and needs of people and the man who is "burned out by activity" and has no time for prayer).

Keeping in mind that we are in a period of transition in which "the old" and "the new" are still found together, we ask each community to examine its prayer life and to find its own style of prayer, decide upon its times of prayer — all in a spirit of respect for one another and with the desire to help the community to pray better.

3.4 Some Questions for Reflection:

- 30. Have you at all felt a need to reflect corporately on your common prayer life? If so, have you done this? What are the results of this corporate reflection?
- 31. What relationship do you see between work and prayer?
- 32. Libermann's favorite way of expressing the basis for all apostolic prayer was "practical union with God." What is the meaning of this phrase for you? Does it provide for you the basis of your prayer life and for an integration of prayer and work?
- 33. To what degree is there an authentic continuity between your personal, religious community, and ministerial prayer life?
- 34. Has your circumscription / local community found difficulty in achieving a satisfactory mode of common prayer? What are these difficulties? What steps have you taken to achieve more satisfactory experiences in common prayer?
- 35. The Chapter of 1968-69 removed the obligation of a half-hour's mental prayer before daily Mass, and instead asked each Spiritan to "devote a substantial amount of time each day to personal prayer" (C.D.D., 139 a). How far have you been faithful to this?
- 36. Does your Spiritan community "readily affirm and live its unity participating together in the Eucharist?" If not, can the community find a way to make common participation in a community Eucharist the high point of its celebration of community?
- 37. If you are a priest and if you normally celebrate Mass outside your Spiritan community, or if you prefer to celebrate Mass privately, do you also participate in the community Eucharist? If not, can you suggest a way which would make your participation possible?
- 38. Do you ever seek direction from another confrere when you find yourself in spiritual danger or difficulty? Do you sometimes feel the need of such help?
- 39. Should the General Chapter provide any further directives in relation to Spiritan prayer life? Is so, what should they be?

OUR MISSIONARY MINISTRY

Towards the New Missionary Epoch

"The crowds... wanted to prevent Him leaving them, but he answered: I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God to the other towns too..." (Luke 4: 42-43).

General Introduction

It is commonly agreed that we have come to the end of one missionary era and that another one is about to begin. "Are we at the beginning of a new period? Is a new phase in the work of evangelization getting under way? ... Yes, at the dawn of the third millenium of Christianity, we can expect a new phase in the proclamation of the Gospel." (Paul VI on Mission Sunday, October 1977).

What is this new missionary era which is about to dawn? It must be admitted that we can give only a halting reply. Perhaps its most characteristic trait will be a new missionary impulse which can already be found in Evangelii Nuntiandi: to evangelize the modern world — every man and all men individually and collectively — its criteria and all its standards of judgment; incarnation in the various cultures; a new approach to the great religions; attention to all who are far removed from the Gospel. Speaking of the "new apostles" of the new era, Paul VI sees them as having "a well-developed sense of universality."

Every institute which wants to be a part of the Mission of today and tomorrow is and must be involved in this general trend of the Church's Mission. One harvest is being reaped; we must think about the next sowing. During this transition period, let us recall that a patched cloth often tears again worse than ever, that new wine can burst old bottles and everything is lost. We had better believe that "new wine must be put into new bottles" (Mark 2: 21-22).

We can see in this a challenge for missionary institutes not to be content to follow the same old ways (even though renewed) of a great missionary epoch which is drawing to a close, but rather to open themselves up more to the universality of the Mission, listening to new appeals. Missionary institutes must once again be pioneers as they were at the time they were founded. For us to be a part of this, renewal and on-going formation are essential, — especially up-dating on the Church-as-the-People-of-God, as Servant Church in which everybody has a responsibility in the diversity and complementarity of service. (cf. I Cor. 12).

The few guidelines we shall give in this section are an attempt to trace the path we ought to follow, keeping in mind:

- the actual life and work of Spiritans;
- the needs and appeals of the Churches in which we work;
- the signs which give some forecast of the future;
- above all, the inspiration of our Founders.

Some General Trends:

Our global orientation must be that of more openness to the universality of the Mission. The criteria will be:

a) to be a part of (or a response to) the Church's new missionary epoch which is just finding its way and will devote itself to the new needs of today and tomorrow;

b) to make choices which are fully in agreement with and are signs of the traditional ideal of the Congregation (properly interpreted): "poor and abandoned," "difficult situations," "situations for which the Church has difficulty finding laborers," "frontier situations;"

c) to see to it that these choices also respond to the needs of the Congregation and help to shape it for the future; e.g.

- at the same time as commitments here and there are coming to an end, there should be plans for the future;
- as our actual commitments become more diverse, as our solidarity grows stronger, as our missionary endeavors
 are directed towards new appeals, the question of our identity must be kept in mind. There should be choices
 made which will make the ideals of our origin and of our common vocation stand out significantly.
- it is desirable that the Congregation become more universal, both in its membership (national origins) and in its commitments, so as to be ready for tomorrow's Mission. In this way, the Congregation will be renewed and reformed and become a witness to the universal, a means of exchange between Churches, a sign of universal brotherhood. With members from different countries and continents, the Congregation can avoid getting closed and limited to such-or-such a group of missionaries or to responding only to appeals which can take missionaries from such-or-such a culture.

d) Integral human development has always been a part of our missionary service: schools, dispensaries, workshops, rural development schemes, etc. Today there is a whole movement within religious institutes asking questions about the witness and commitment of religious in favor of justice and peace, in favor of the poor and oppressed, in opposition to inequalities. It is a long tradition of God's People, inspired by Christ himself, that the religious missionary's activity must be incarnated in the local Church and address itself to local concerns and problems.

e) We draw attention to urban pastoral work, especially in the Third World, because of the importance of the cities, but especially because of the massive influx of people into them. It is noted that often the migration to the cities creates difficult situations in the periphery. These situations could be "privileged" places for us to work.

4.1.3 Some Possible Orientations:

At the 1978 Enlarged Council, it was suggested:

- that we follow up inquiries in the Middle East, especially the Arab countries (for dialogue with Islam);
- that we make inquiries in Asia (many think that Asia, with its immense populations, is the land of the future);
- that we be attentive to appeals from outside our present commitments. We are often asked: where are the "poor" and the "oppressed" today? In order to become diversified, as well as to be present to the centers of gravity of the Church, should we not look for commitments among such people in other Latin American countries (in addition to Brazil and Paraguay) and also in Europe and in North America?

Could some inquiry be made into the countries of the Communist world and the other countries which are closed to the Gospel? Would it be possible to encourage missionminded laymen (even consecrated laymen) to engage in international work teams which are sometimes requested by such countries?

4.1.4 Some Questions for Reflection:

- 40. The Second Vatican Council has emphasized that ministry is service. How generally has this concept been absorbed?
- 41. Do you agree that we are moving towards an understanding of Mission as it is described above?
- 42. Are the broad outlines given above an adequate description of Mission in the years to come?
- 43. Keeping in mind the actual life and work of Spiritans, the needs and appeals of the Churches where we are working, the signs which give some forecast of the future, and, above all, the inspirational ideals set forth by our Founders, what direction do you see the Congregation taking in relation to the new missionary impulse spoken of in Evangelii Nuntiandi?

4.2 First Evangelization:

4.2.1 According to the will of its Founders, the Congregation exists for a labor of the Church — a labor which is primordially one of EVANGELIZATION.

(This does not exclude works which are not directly evangelization; e.g. development, social and economic liberation, conscientization, education, etc. All these are included among the means which can help evangelization and must be subordinated to that end).

Within the general Mission of the whole Church for the evangelization of all men, the Congregation was founded for the evangelization of the poorest and the most abandoned, those who, even in the Church, are the most neglected because the Church «has difficulty in finding laborers" for this ministry (cf. First Spiritan Rule of 1734, Chap. 1-3).

Not only by his writings, but especially by his actions, Father Libermann invites us to listen to the appeals which come to us from those in greatest need, those who are the most forsaken... In order that we may be able to do this, God's will and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are constantly manifested to us in the midst of changing historical situations. The Congregation must always be attentive to this.

4.2.2 Question for Reflection:

44. Do you think that the Congregation is sufficiently faithful to the Founders' intention and to the situations which constitute appeals to us?

4.3 Helping the Churches to Become Self-Sufficient

4.3.1 Background:

In preparation for the 1978 Enlarged Council we made an inquiry concerning priority commitments. The results clearly showed that the principal concerns were: the formation of Christian communities, the formation of a responsible laity and the development of the ministries, vocations to the priesthood, the religious life and the missionary apostolate.

These results show the direction that the missionary activity of a great number of Spiritans is taking. As a matter of fact, it also corresponds to the priorities of the Bishops in the areas where we work. Thus, after a long period of first evangelization, founding new Churches and helping older ones, we now find ourselves in the phase of contributing to the building-up of those Churches to the point where they will be self-sufficient. It seems to us that the concerns mentioned above shed light on some of the best ways of doing precisely that.

2 Orientations:

This view of our work permits us to foresee, in the near or not-so-near future, the end of our mission in *some* dioceses or countries, where no indigenous Spiritan foundation can be made. Younger missionaries will uproot themselves and move to new missionary situations; other men will prefer to continue their missionary work where they have always lived. Others again, because of health, age or particular circumstances, will prefer to continue their missionary service in a church of their own culture (*cf. G.A.*, 2). A Spiritan does not cease to be a missionary-religious. But wherever he works, whether in his own culture or elsewhere, he is a religious-missionary, takes his part in the mission of the Congregation, and lives according to the exigencies of his call by Christ to our Fraternal Community.

It is part of the reality of our present situation that a relatively large number of priest-confreres who were formerly "on the missions" are now working in parochial situations in churches of their own culture. This is a new phenomenon in the history of our Congregation. Many of these confreres are isolated. In some cases regional communities have been set up. In other cases this has still to be done. Many bishops have told us that what they want of Spiritans in their dioceses over and above their pastoral work, is the testimony of their community and religious life. We invite these confreres to engage in prayerful reflection with their provincial or principal superiors to find how best they can live according to the exigencies of their missionary religious vocation. While larger Spiritan communities are hospitable and welcoming to their confreres who live in parishes, the grouping of confreres in regional communities is still necessary.

3 Some Questions for Reflection:

- 45. Given the fact that the present ministry of many Spiritans is directed to helping churches to become self-sufficient, what do you think are the guidelines that we should follow in arriving at a decision to disengage from commitments in order to avoid letting ourselves become imprisoned in them?
- 46. How can confreres who live in parochial situations in the provinces best give testimony of a missionary-religious vocation?

4 Re-Evaluating our Ministry to Youth

We are convinced that more attention to the ministry to youth is one of the characteristics of the new missionary epoch which is dawning. It offers almost endless opportunities for opening the minds of young Christians to a more universal attitude and to more genuine and practical concern for both the spiritual and the temporal welfare of the entire human family. Everybody who works with young people is aware of their remarkable generosity, enthusiasm and energy. No religious congregation can refuse to do its part in ministering to them wherever we come in cantact with them so that those good qualities of theirs may be sanctified and directed towards the building up of the kingdom of God.

Background:

Our Congregation has a long tradition of ministry to youth in various domains; e.g.

- Poullart des Places and his "poor students"
- Father Brottier's orphans
- schools in the Districts and Provinces
- still today a notable number of confreres are engaged in this ministry

All through our inquiry about priorities, we found frequent reference to pastoral work among young people as being a major pre-occupation of the Bishops in the countries where we work.

For various reasons, this ministry has been running into more and more difficulty, especially in the works of education:

- It is said that young people are not interested in the Church;
- Governments and other lay agencies are getting more and more control over the schools;
- Some of our schools have reached a status where they can no longer be said to be serving the economically poor;

- Our available personnel has decreased and our young confreres are less and less attracted by our works of education
 - (The question is sometimes asked: is it really those works of education which fail to attract them, or is it sometimes rather the life-style and attitude of many of those engaged in them; e.g. opposition to change of any kind, a theological outlook and a prayer life which are uncongenial to young people, a lack of missionary impulse, etc.)?
- Many works of education are undergoing difficulties regarding structures, policies, personnel, etc.

4.4.3 Orientations:

We feel that there is need to re-evaluate this ministry, — in both senses of "re-evaluate": a) make a critical appraisal; and b) try to "maximize" once more the values inherent in this ministry and our commitments to it.

In line with our tradition and with today's needs, our ministry to youth can take on new life and direction if we can manage to:

- give special attention to the young in our pastoral care of Christian communities;
- work among the young in the area of vocations, of care for migrant peoples, of missionary animation, of awareness of the Third World and its problems;
- give preference to those young people who can be classed as "poor": those in financial difficulty, the "sociological cases," outcasts, drug addicts, those who tend towards violence, etc.
- respond to the human and spiritual vacuum in which many young people live, by means of small "welcoming" communities or groups where they will have an experience of fraternity and of God;
- work in and with centers of prayer for young people. (It is worth noting that all of these possible activities require the participation of at least some young confreres. Therefore, particularly in the Provinces, we should not be entirely deprived of the presence and activity of these).

As far as schools are concerned, one might foresee a total disengagement if present personnel trends throughout the Congregation continue. But there may be other possibilities; e.g. a study of our commitment to these institutions with a view to a more effective Spiritan presence in them. In the past these schools were places where young people lived with Spiritans; can we hope for some new form of communities of Gospel sharing, of evangelization, of missionary fervor, in the context of these institutions?

There are, however, two important points to be kept in mind:

a) as in the case of all our works and commitments, the re-evaluation of these communities and of their presence in the schools must be done within them, not just outside them by others who seem to question their Spiritan authenticity. We can suggest questions to them, but finally it is they who must question themselves. One of the important questions we do propose to them is: "What precisely is your educational and apostolic ideal or objective in terms of which you would like to evaluate yourselves?"

b) in addition to all our suggestions regarding the apostolate to youth within the school setting, we must remember to respect the importance of professional qualifications and of the very demanding academic endeavors which are necessary to give our confreres in that setting the position and credibility they need in order to have the occasion to deal apostolically with the young people there also.

Thus we ask the Spiritan communities in all our works of education to make their self-evaluation (in both the senses outlined above. The specific case of Duquesne University is brought to mind by the fact of its recent celebration of a century of service of which any Spiritan can well be proud. We realize that a greater degree of Spiritan solidarity is needed if such communities are to be able to continue their mission. Perhaps we could be more alert to what our university or college communities can do, with our help, in the promotion of justice and peace, in the creation of attitudes more favorable to the poor, in providing inter-cultural, inter-racial and ecumenical meeting-places, as well as helping us to prepare the "specialists" needed by the Congregation and its works.

There are situations in one or other District where educational work could be recommended in the context of Islam, so as to establish and justify a presence there and provide an occasion for dialogue.

4.4.4 Some Questions for Reflection:

- 47. Is it your experience that ministry to youth is a high priority in the churches in which you work?
- 48. How would you evaluate the quality of the Spiritan ministry to youth in your circumscription?
- 49. In particular, what is the nature of your outreach to special categories of the "poor" among youth: juvenile delinquents, victims of broken homes, outcasts, drug addicts, those who tend towards violence, etc.?

5 Responding to Today's Needs and Appeals

- The ministerial choices placed before us at this moment can be characterized by:
- an attention to real needs of the day;
- today's types of missionary strategies;
- hope for the future and a willingness to go forward.

Background ("Sign-Priorities")

It is not necessary here to go over what we mean by "sign-priorities"; everybody knows it. Let us simply recall the ways in which the Congregation is making use of these symbolic choices to renew itself, respond to to-day's needs and open the way to the future:

- assistance to Provinces and Districts in great difficulty (Belgium and other Provinces, South Africa, Angola, Paraguay, Mexico, Dioceses of Kindu and Bafia),
- re-evaluation of old works (Auteuil; some of our works of education,
- response to calls for specialists for precise tasks, especially in the theological disciplines (for on-going formation, for the new Foundations, for animation teams, for theological institutes like those in London and Duquesne), and in Islamic Studies,
- some diversification of our commitments; e.g. Guinea-Bissau,
- commitments in the Provinces: helping migrant peoples, doing missionary animation, setting up "witness-communities,"
- recruitment of missionaries in the new Churches and incarnation of the Congregation there,
- openness to the Universal Mission, within which our preferential choices are: "poor and abandoned", "first evangelization", "difficult situations" (e.g. Pakistan, Angola).

What is so new about all these is that their implementation is to be carried out by Major Superiors of various circumscriptions who co-responsibly commit themselves to these symbolic choices. In this way our "common project" will take shape.

Orientations (Recommendations)

a) for Provinces in difficulty:

Renewal within the old structures seems very slow and difficult. One wonders whether we should not look for new ways of proceeding; e.g. setting up some new venture, operated by a special team, which would provide an attractive Spiritan presence and give hope for the renewal of the Province.

b) for commitment within the Provinces:

Our Mission is not limited to what we still call the "Districts". It can also be found in the Provinces. Many of the very people we go so far away to seek are actually right on our door-step. Many of them are in difficult straits; e.g. migrant peoples who sometimes are our only possible point of contact with representatives of the countries which are closed to the Gospel. That is why we speak of "missionary situations". We still have our traditional criteria for judging these. We would also add the criteria of the present day: "justice and peace", the need for some commitment in our Churches of origin (greater solidarity with them than in the past), the problem of a suitable ministry for those who return to the Province of origin.

c) for the preparation of "Specialists":

If the Congregation is to take on new missionary works in areas outside our traditional areas of activity, we will need specialists in view of these tasks. Even today, and perhaps more so in the future, Spiritans are working in countries where a Marxist ideology is in favor. We need men who, in accordance with the directives of the Holy See, are trained in the Christian-Marxist dialogue. At present most requests for specialists are for the theological disciplines. We do not have nearly enough of them. Even for our present missionary commitments we need men qualified in missiology, in linguistics, in Islamic Studies, and in other fields. We must also foster specialization in the other, more traditional "profane" disciplines to the extent that our commitments call for them. Study projects should enter fully into the Project of the Congregation and should be in function of a pastoral need accepted after a discernment process by the Spiritan community. We also need some people in mission studies who have more than just a primary degree in their specialty but who are of sufficient calibre and have the necessary Isiaure to be come specialists at an inter-congregational level.

d) for the diversification of commitments beyond present ones:

One might be tempted to say that we have no need of further commitments; we can't answer all the demands made upon us in the places where we are working already.

Still, there are good reasons for recommending diversification:

- in order not to maintain or increase "blocks";
- in order to prepare for a future beyond the time when the older missions no longer need us; and to respond to the urgent appeals wherever they may come from (openness to the Universal Mission);
- in order to universalize the Congregation itself still more (avoid limiting it to membership from the present national and racial groups in it) and to make it more capable of responding to tomorrow's mission which will include exchange between Churches, inter-racial encounter, signs of universal brotherhood.

That is why it would be desirable to make an inquiry of priorities outside our present commitments. This would be helpful for the 1980 General Chapter which could push co-responsibility even further.

e) for giving a missionary impulse:

In the midst of recent appeals, we pay particular attention to the need of giving a missionary impulse and of recruiting missionaries.

Missionary animation can be defined as the attempt to create a missionary spirit in the Churches, to inspire vocations of both religious and lay missionaries. It also promotes the type of mission known as "exchange between the Churches", of "two-way street" mission.

All the discussions and uncertainties about the Mission (now mercifully receding little by little into the past) cannot and must not diminish our faith in the Mission which will last to the end of time and which needs mission-

Paying heed to the signs of the times, we stress the following points:

- we have to make our contribution towards making the Churches and communities missionary (Ad Gentes, 6, 20). Several Bishops have asked us specifically to do this. A Church or a community is adult only when it becomes missionary.
- we have to recruit missionaries: lay people, priests, religious. The Mission has become the responsibility of the entire People pf God. In the future, we shall have to bring the laity into closer association with missionary
- we must foster the new Spiritan Foundations: we look forward to recruiting from all Churches missionaries for the Universal Mission.

4.5.4 Some Questions for Reflection

ON TODAY'S APPEALS:

- 50. To what degree does concern for justice and peace pervade all ministry which we render as Spiritans? What more do you feel we should do to insure that it is essential to our ministry?
- 51. Do you feel that you have made a sufficient effort to identify the "missionary situations" (cf. I/D 5) in your circumscription?
- 52. Specifically, is there an "immigrant people" present within your circumscription whose condition assumes the proportions of a "missionary situation"?

 If so, is there anything that Spiritans ought to be doing beyond what they are now doing in this regard?

- 53. How do you evaluate the types of ministerial commitments you have to offer confreres who return to their Province of origin?
- 54. How much interest in missionary animation is there in your circumscription?

How do you evaluate what is actually being done in the matter?

- 55. What steps is your circumscription taking to prepare specialists in any of the fields which can meet the needs of Spiritan Life either in your circumscription or in the Congregation at large?
- 56. What can the General Chapter do to promote, support and supplement the training of specialists who will address themselves to the various dimensions of our Spiritan Life?

ON DIVERSIFICATION:

- 57. What is your appreciation of the desirability for the Congregation to diversify further its membership (as to national origins) and commitments beyond those which we now have?
- 58. If your response to question 57 is positive, what can you recommend to the General Chapter by way of steps towards fulfilling this need?
- 59. What are the guidelines that the Congregation ought to follow in making new ministerial commitments?
- 60. How can the General Chapter help in delineating these guidelines?

ON GIVING A NEW MISSIONARY IMPULSE:

61. More and more local Churches are coming to realize that they are not fully mature Churches until they are missionary. In some cases they have specifically asked the Spiritans to be the animating force and first agents in helping them to become missionary.

Is this the case in your circumscription?

If so, how are you responding to that call?

If not, how are you tostering growth towards some analogous missionary consciousness there?

SPIRITAN FOUNDATIONS

"... The Holy Spirit said: 'I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them.'" (Acts 13:2)

Thus the Church at Antioch became missionary.

We believe that the new Spiritan Foundations can be taken as "instances" of achievements already realized in the line of coresponsible movement towards the new missionary epoch and a unified yet diversified Congregation.

Background:

The new missionary epoch will be characterized also by the participation of the young Churches along with the older ones in the Universal Mission of the Church.

"... upon the particular Churches which are already set up (there lies) the duty of continuing this activity and of preaching the Gospel to those still outside."
(Ad Gentes, 6).

"... it is very fitting that the young Churches should participate as soon as possible in the universal missionary work of the Church. Let them send their own missionaries to proclaim the Gospel all over the world, even though they themselves are suffering from a shortage of clergy. For their communion with the universal Church reaches a certain measure of perfection when they themselves take an active part in missionary zeal toward other nations."

(Ad Gentes, 20).

We have an important task today: that of recruiting missionaries from all the Churches. Some of them could well be Spiritans. These new missionaries are for the Congregation, as for the Church, a promise for the future. What progress are we making in this line?

a) There is a growth of missionary vocations in the Third World. In general, the local Bishops agree to candidates joining some institute or other, especially if it is a congregation which shows signs of vitality and universality. We think that this is so in our case.

Just as the Universal Church is hoping for and is already experiencing a renewal of vitality and universality visa-vis the Third World, so too is our Congregation — by means of the Spiritan Foundations. Thus finding itself in the general movement of the Church, the Congregation is preparing itself too for the new missionary epoch.

b) In response to the rise of missionary vocations, the Major Superiors — singly or in groups — have begun the Spiritan Foundations, or else have found other solutions. They all try to find solutions in line with the possibilities of the place, difficult as it may sometimes be. We must admire what is being done. These Major Superiors are insuring real incarnation of the Church and of the Congregation in those places.

c) At present, the Foundations stand as follows:

- Province of Eastern Nigeria: according to the statistics at hand, there are: 44 priests, 1 brother, 55 scholastics, 13 novices, 17 postulants, 352 in the junior seminary.
- Province of Angola: there are 3 theologians, 7 philosophers, 5 professed brothers and 65 junior seminarians.
- East African Foundation: 7 theologians, 5 novices, 21 philosophers, 50 in pre-novitiate. The 4 who have been ordained priests have been assigned to Zambia.
- Francophone African Foundation: 3 professed (from Cameroun, Gabon, Senegal); some additional vocations in view.
- Other Vocations in Africa:

Makurdi: 2 newly professed, one in prenovitiate.

Ghana: Total number of Aspirants is 18; of these, between 3 and 5 could be ready for the novitiate in September.

Guinea: 2 or 3 candidates in the senior seminary.

- Puerto Rico: 10 in the pre-novitiate.
- Brazil: 7 professed scholastics in theology, 8 in philosophy. There will be a novitiate class in 1979.
- Paraguay: several young men interested in joining the Congregation. Brazil is being considered for possible formation for them.
- Madagascar: 2 candidates, one of whom is in theology.

5.2 Orientations:

Taking into account the factors:

- that the young men want to get beyond their own frontiers and meet other young Spiritans;
- that the «Project of the Congregation» is characterized by a new striving for universality which will transcend all kinds of frontiers;
- that the formation we hope for should be both incarnated in the local culture and broader than that culture ... we must see to it that the Foundations are not tied to (imported) linguistic frontiers, to cultural frontiers (English, French, Portuguese).

Bound up with this problem is the question of material construction. It is worth while to ask; is it good to let the development of physical plants go on as it is at present, — especially where these developments are purely local? If we do, then we shall have to look for ways of opening the candidates up to the Project of the Congregation, of getting them to transcend frontiers. Should we not rather, wherever it is still possible, try to establish a better balance between incarnation in the local scene and openness to the universal by means of some sort of grouping together of candidates from different cultures? One such possibility is being presented to us by the proposal for a West Africa Foundation.

The day-to-day problems of the Foundations and their incarnation in the local culture are to be handled by the Major Superiors on the spot. It is the job of the Generalate Team to keep them directed towards the Common Project.

The primary objective of the Foundations is to recruit missionaries from the local Church for the Universal Mission. This will provide one means for the local Church to take part in the Church's worldwide missionary activity. At the same time, our Congregation will be developing something essential to every Church: "to be missionary", to share "the co-responsibility for Evangelisation" with the other Churches.

Certain consequences flow from this, especially concerning the question "for what Mission are they being recruited?".

- the Foundations, like all circumscriptions, have to live with the tension between the evangelization project of the local Church and openness to the Universal Mission of the Congregation.
- because of the way local Churches have been evolving recently and also because of personnel needs, this tension is certainly stronger for the Foundations than for the older circumscriptions.
- because of recent evolution in the Congregation towards the idea of the common vocation or common project, the Foundations are called to greater openness, to transcend not only the project of the local Church but also that of one or even several Districts or Provinces in order to become a part of the common project in coresponsibility.
- the Congregation is trying to get beyond all kinds of frontiers territorial and linguistic, of Provinces and Districts, even of a mission exclusively "ad extra" to respond to appeals, wherever they may come from, which are in line with our criteria. The Foundations will have to identify their Mission in a similar way.

While it is true that the Congregation stimulates the Foundations by way of its common vocation (Spiritan Life, mission objectives, form of government), it is also true that the Foundations stimulate the Congregation:

- to allow itself to be changed, when necessary, by the presence of Spiritans from other cultures (e.g. as concerns the way of living the Spiritan Life);
- to seize the opportunity to become more universal and to enter more easily into the kind of Mission which is characterized by exchange and mutual aid between Churches.

Can we look still farther ahead? If our guess is right — that the missionary institutes of the future are the ones which can attain a certain degree of universality both in membership and in objectives, — then we have to shape the Congregation accordingly and to make some gestures which may bear fruit in the more or less distant future. This is the time to sow the seed of the Congregation which is to be in years to come.

5.3 Some Questions for Reflection

- 62. How ready are we to seize the opportunity to become more universal as a Congregation?
- 63. How aware are we of the value of new ministerial commitments as the possible seed of future diversification of the membership of the Congregation?
- 64. How ready are those in the older circumscriptions to allow themselves to undergo change, when necessary, because of the inter-dependence required when living and working with Spiritans from other cultures?
- 65. What is the response in your circumscription to appeals from the new Foundations for assistance: personnel, financial aid, welcoming and supportive acceptance of their members who come for part of their studies?
- 66. What can be done to help the young Spiritans in these new Foundations to have more contact with other Provinces and Districts?
- 67. How can we insure that the Foundations are not tied to (imported) linguistic barriers and cultures?
- 68. Have you any recommendations for the General Chapter in the matter of the new Foundations?

PERSONNEL AND PLANNING

We have given some thought to the Spiritan life and commitments. We should now take a look at the structures necessary to foster that life and those objectives. It is often said that, for the renewal of an institute, there must be "life-giving structures".

Background

.1.2

1968 GENERAL CHAPTER: SUBSIDIARITY:

De-centralization operates through the principle of subsidiarity. The circumscriptions affirm their own identity and responsibility.

1974 GENERAL CHAPTER: SOLIDARITY:

The diversity which had developed since 1968 was recognized as a richness. But the "dispersed brethren", seemingly so different, became worried about their unity. A movement towards solidarity began; — we must get beyond frontiers, draw closer to one another, not be put off by barriers of Provinces and Districts (internationality).

1976 ENLARGED COUNCIL: CO-RESPONSIBILITY:

All Major Superiors are collegially responsible for the missionary endeavour, the common task of the whole Congregation. A breath of universality is being felt in the Congregation as in the Church.

1978 ENLARGED COUNCIL: SPIRITAN LIFE AND CO-RESPONSIBILITY:

"The Enlarged Council considers the renewal of Spiritan Life to be the priority of priorities for Spiritans." Co-responsibility develops through discernment in common of priority commitments for the entire Congregation. The 1978 Enlarged Council marks an important step in the direction of a common project: a greater awareness of a mission to be lived together in the name of a common vocation.

1980 GENERAL CHAPTER: SPIRITAN LIFE:

The 1978 Enlarged Council proposes that "the one subject of the 1980 General Chapter be the Spiritan Life". The hope is that we will all work together in solidarity for the renewal of Spiritan Life.

Orientations

The Chapter of 1974 defined the work of the General Council as a "work of animation". It was "to determine objectives in accordance with the decrees of the Chapters" (G.A. 118-30). It was to provide inspirational leadership to further common responsibility especially in the field of personnel and financial aid (G. A. 138). It was to set up the Enlarged Council "to improve communication between the different Provinces, Districts and groups and to promote the unity of all with the Generalate" G. A. 131). The Chapter hoped that by regional meetings, by an Enlarged Council, by the in-depth visitation of the circumscriptions, the Congregation would arrive at a genuine community of sharing for the whole Congregation, in personnel, in finances, and in information (G. A. 138).

The confreres of the Congregation can judge for themselves how far it has moved in these directions during the last five years. In the General Council we are very conscious of the enormous gap between the expectations put on us and what little we have achieved. But then, as we wrote in our first letter to the confreres, we don't take ourselves too seriously.

We would like however to share with you a difficulty we have experienced in furthering unity and cooperation between the different circumscriptions and in putting into effect priorities determined by the Enlarged Councils. We have enjoyed the friendship and cooperation of every major superior, but nevertheless we often find ourselves without means to supply personnel where it may be urgently required.

There are, of course, obvious reasons for this: there are much fewer young Spiritans in formation than there were twenty years ago; the average age of the confreres is rising, and visa restrictions make it sometimes impossible to help by sending in men.

But one difficulty regarding personnel might be susceptible of solution: it is the question of the coordination of personnel.

For many years now personnel requirements have been decided primarily in function of the Province-and-its-Districts framework. Appointments outside this framework have been the exception rather than the rule, even though all appointments went through the Mother-House. This framework was so much taken for granted that in 1968 the Chapter legislated that "As a rule, members shall be appointed to works in one of the Districts attached to their Province; they may be employed outside these Districts only with their consent" (CDD 238, a). One wonders whether members can be appointed anywhere without their consent. However this is the first time in any official document where there is mention of a District being attached to a Province.

The framework remains powerful if only because of its inertia. The Districts tend to feel that they have first right to personnel from "their" Province (or Provinces). The framework tends to perpetuate the sending of men to existing Districts some of which are already almost selfsupporting in indigenous personnel. It does not leave the door open for new missionary foundations elsewhere and tends to perpetuate missionary blocks.

The Chapter of 1968-69 gave to the Provincial the right to assign personnel to (his) Districts, to other Provinces in special need and to special works after consultation with the Provincial and Principal Superiors concerned and with the prior agreement of the Generalate (CDD 202, b). However it also gave to the Principal Superior the right to exchange personnel with other Districts after consulting the Provincial concerned (DD, 218, b). Both Provincial and Principal are major superiors and any changes of personnel require the consent of each one. When there is a disagreement recourse can be had to the Generalate. Here again, the process presumes a closed framework of Provinces and Districts.

The Chapter of 1968-69 left first appointments to the General Council (CDD, 202, c) though, of course, these appointments were to be made within the Province-and-its-Districts framework (CDD, 238). The Chapter of 1974 complicated things further, perhaps inadvertently, by stipulating that "The Provinces will take the missionary priorities into account both in first appointments and in the exchange of personnel". Was this intended to abrogate CDD 202, c? The General Council is not sure, and most Provinces present their first appointments for ratification by the General Council and from time to time the General Council has asked for changes in first appointments and the Provincials have always agreed.

The question is not whether we should go back to the dim distant days when all appointments were made by the Superior General and his Council, but whether first appointments and all changes of appointment from one circumscription to another could not be better coordinated in a spirit of coresponsibility. If the Congregation has a common project, a common mission, then there should be a better coordination of personnel. If on the other hand, each province is an independent entity with its own districts or mission fields, there is no need for coordination.

In our evaluation of the last Enlarged Council (Knechtsteden, 1978) we wrote: "If the concept of co-responsibility for the common missionary project of the Congregation is to grow in meaning, we must think in future of the mission of the Congregation as a whole, and see the needs of our particular Spiritan circumscription in this context; and we must not see the missionary priorities of the Congregation as a kind of alms-box to which we contribute when other personnel needs have been fulfilled. Just as personal projects should be fitted into the Project of the Congregation (G. A. 60) so also the projects of the Circumscriptions. As the Congregation grows rapidly smaller, its survival will depend on this co-responsibility, on this internationality". We are wondering whether the Enlarged Council, a structure which expresses the coresponsibility of the Major Superiors, could not become a body capable of co-ordinating requests for personnel.

In the hypothesis that some co-ordination of personnel is required, it would seem necessary for the Spiritan circumscriptions to participate in a planning process in which common objectives would be accepted by all and in the fulfilment of which all would be co-responsible and accountable. The General Council would then be the executor (executive) of these goals.

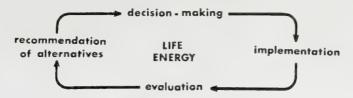
If we do not enter into such a corporate planning process, it is difficult to see how the Congregation can achieve the solidarity it seems to desire and will remain a loose federation of almost completely autonomous groups. In such a case, a General Chapter serves merely to gather representatives from these groups from time to time in order to issue corporate hortative statements.

In a decentralized form of government, it is our feeling that legitimate authority can only be effective when the group has clearly identified its goals and objectives through a collegial and participative decision-making process. When a group decides to adopt a form of governance which is collegial and participative, the leadership body renders its service to the group in two principal ways: a) animation/facilitation and b) executive authority.

As an animating team the general Council is meant to facilitate the participatory process by which the entire Congregation clarifies its corporate goals and objectives in a collegial way. Hence, the leadership supports, extends calls, challenges and cares for the membership so as to involve it in a reflective process through which it will clarify the goals to which it commits itself as a body.

It employs its executive authority in seeing that the implementation of the goals is carried out and by holding accountable those who are co-responsible for the various phases of the implementation process.

Any governmental structures which are life-giving (i.e. make the group come alive and foster its growth) must assure a life-energy flow within the group. This life-energy flow involves four principal phases: 1) decision-making; 2) implementation; 3) evaluation and 4) recommendation of alternatives for further decisions. Note that this is a cyclic and on-going process which provides the continuity which the group looks for and needs.



Should the cycle break down at any one or more of the phases, the life of the group either stagnates or dies. The administrative body has the authority and responsibility to see to it that the membership respects and is in some way involved in all or some of these phases of the life-giving governance cycle. In its double role of animation and authority it thereby generates life in the group.

It should be noted that such a governance life-cycle presumes and incorporates collegiality, subsidiarity, co-responsibility and accountability, which are the ultimate ingredients of corporate solidarity.

Presumably, it becomes evident from what has been said that unless all four phases of the above cycle are present in any given group, it can only expect to have a very loose cohesion between its various parts, and at best formulate hortative aspirational statements for which no one can really be held accountable. In other words, the governing body has very little or no authority.

Structures which foster a participative planning process (the above life/energy cycle), and thereby enable the group to set corporate goals and objectives for which it can be held accountable by legitimate authority, give direction, growth and solidarity to the group.

Some Questions for Reflection

- 69. Do you think that a Congregational planning process whereby we are co-responsible for setting and implementing corporate goals would help revivify the Spiritan Life in your circumscription and the Congregation as a whole?
- 70. What part do you think the Enlarged Council can play in the co-ordination of personnel needs?
- 71. Maybe you feel that the present system of distribution of personnel is adequate for present needs. What do you think?
- 72. In order to foster solidarity in our common vocation and co-responsibility for our common project, what weight do you think should be given to the animating and the executive role of the General Administration in governing the Congregation?
- 73. What is the best way to implement our Congregationwide goals and establish accountability for them between the various levels of responsibility within the Congregation?
- 74. In terms of the "planning life-cycle" described above, which phases do you feel are strongest in our mode of governance at the level of the General Administration? Which are the weakest?

FORMATION AS SPIRITANS

Our Congregation is a Fraternal Community called together by Christ in a common religious-missionary vocation. It follows that Spiritan formation is primarily concerned with the acquisition of the virtues and dispositions required for the living of this vocation. In the order of importance this comes first; afterwards come the special studies which fit men for the diversity of ministries which the Congregation exercises in the service of the Mission. Whether we are deacons, priests, or laymen performing other ministries, does not affect this basic equality of membership nor the common basic formation as religious-missionaries which each Spiritan should receive. We are not "The Holy Ghost Fathers"; we are members of a religious missionary institute called the Congregation of the Holy Ghost.

Our common vocation makes us an identifiable ecclesial community founded for a service within the Church of today and tomorrow. It expresses its identity through its life, the lives of each of its members and the special service it exercises in the Church. The Congregation is not an end in itself: its renewal takes the form of an Exodus, in answer to a three-fold call: by God, the Church, and our fellow-men. In the measure in which the Congregation renews itself in Christ and remains faithful to the charisms of its founders, it will be led by the Spirit to do the Father's work.

Spiritan formation is in function of the universal Mission of today and tomorrow. The present is with us, but we can only make guesses about the future. Where will Spiritan missionaries be working in the year 2000? In Africa, Asia, South America, or Europe? Perhaps in China? We cannot see clearly. And so, being a young Spiritan today involves a certain risk. We can be sure, however, that Spiritans will be mainly concerned with Mission in transcultural situations. It follows then that formation should fit a man to work in situations outside his own culture.

To prepare for such a situation, some specialized studies would seem to be necessary or useful: linguistics as a tool for learning languages; social anthropology; the study of the great religions, ideologies such as Marxism which influence the social structure of countries in which we work; a certain training in the analysis of sociopolitical situations.

A large part of the formation of a Spiritan should take place within his own culture. If one is to understand new cultures and be open to them, the first essential is to be aware of one's own cultural identity. The presence of young Spiritans in the home Province is important as a testimony to its vitality and because a good formation community can attract young people to "come and see" how its members live.

Each Spiritan group has its own point of view. During the last five years we have been doing a lot of visiting of Spiritan circumscriptions, and from our very limited point of view, more of the general than the particular, we feel that it is important that some elements of Spiritan formation take place in a context other than that of the province-of-origin, both for the good of the mission and for the good of the Congregation.

One possible way to provide an experience in international living would be for young Spiritans to undertake their first missionary experience in situations outside their own language areas. Some such experiences have been made, or are in progress. Here it is important that the young Spiritan be received into a Spiritan community of shared prayer and work and that his spiritual growth continues.

Another possibility would be the setting up of some international centres where young Spiritans of different cultures and languages could live and pray together while pursuing studies fitting them for their various ministries. Life in such an international community would not be without its difficulties, even its tensions; but if there were a trained formation personnel such a situation might provide a controlled environment for the resolution of such tensions.

A third possibility would be to set up an annual summer experience of some weeks which would bring together young Spiritans from various provinces and help them to get to know each other. The Summer Experience of International Living, planned for Gentinnes, Belgium, in July 1979 was in part motivated by the fact that some provinces have so few in formation that the young Spiritans feel the need for contact with other young Spiritans of their age. This experiment will be evaluated by the Chapter of 1980.

There are, no doubt, other possibilities which confreres may think of.

Many feel that a smaller number of formation communities would make better use of trained personnel while providing a formation community of sufficient size to allow a larger variety of social interaction and a certain mutual education. Perhaps a formation community can be too small, as well as being too big.

Over and above the question as to what extent Spiritan formation should be international, there is the question of the professional formation of the men responsible for centres of formation. Centres for the training of personnel have been set up in many countries, but up till now not many Spiritans engaged in formation have followed such courses. In this matter we seem to be behind other Congregations.

We hope that the Chapter of 1980 will consider the question of formation, in the light of our renewal as a Congregation. Finally, it is the Chapter which will decide!

7.2 Some Questions for Reflection

- 75. How do you see Formation for the Spiritan religious-missionary life?
- 76. How do you conceive of Spiritan formation as a preparation for a trans-cultural mission?
- 77. Do you agree that internationalization of some phases of our Formation would indeed contribute to our growth in unity and foster readiness to move into the new missionary epoch?
- 78. Have you any suggestions for the improvement of the present system of formation?

Our Spiritan Commitment to ...

Justice and Peace

1845

"(The Missionaries) will be the advocates, the supporters and defenders of the weak and small against all who would oppress them." (Libermann: Provisional Rule - N.D. II, 256).

"The fight for justice is a constitutive element of Gospel-preaching, which is the mission of the Church for the liberation of all forms of oppression." (Synod of Bishops, 1971.)

1971

1978

"In union with the Sacred Congregation of Religious... we are convinced of the bonds that unite evangelisation to human development and we are determined to convey this message more efficaciously to our religious brethren throughout the world" (Press Release of Superiors-General on the Commitment of Religious to Human Development: Rome, June 9, 1978.)

"The human conscience, the conscience of the nations, the cry of the poor and above all, the voice of God, the voice of the Church, with me, say to you: 'it is not just, it is not human, it is not Christian, to maintain certain situations which are manifestly unjust'". (John-Paul II to Mexican Indians: Jan. 29, 1979. Translated from Documentation Catholique, No. 1758, P. 174.)

1979

It is not our intention to use the above quotations as a pad from which to launch religious life on a "new" and ill-conceived path. On the contrary reference to God, to whom our lives are consecrated in Obedience, Poverty and Chastity, is of the very essence of our religious state. We believe we have made this sufficiently clear in recent publications, when we spoke of SPIRITUAL RENEWAL and its consequences in the practical order: of all that concerns indeed our relationship to God.

What follows therefore is intended to complement what we have already said. Its purpose is to remind us that our common sharing in the Gospel message embraces also another relationship and calls for another renewal: the RENEWAL OF COMMUNITY and of COMMITMENT, in the fullest sense, to THE

SERVICE OF MEN.

Religious Life and Apostolic Action are inseparable from each other. Each calls for the support of the other. Thus, the spiritual renewal of Spiritans and of Spiritan Communities inspires renewed dedication and generosity in the service of the Mission, of the poor and the oppressed; which presented to the Lord is a source of deeper interior life.

Not without reason, human language distinguishes between those elements in our lives which are most closely united when it describes us as "RELIGIOUS-MISSIONARIES". That is indeed the very core of our vocation but it also indicates why we must always expect difficulty in preserving the delicate balance between the two. Torn between thirst for God and desire to feed the hungry multitude of men, Father LAVAL and many others like him, remind us that this dilemma is by no means new.

Why get actively involved?

The "sins of society" are as old as the world. There have always existed countries or social classes where human rights were ignored or injustice elevated into a system, in which the full development of the human person was unknown, misunderstood or simply reserved to an elite. The same is unfortunately true also in our day.

In latter years nonetheless, and more especially since Vatican Council II, and the publication of certain pontifical documents on world-problems, the world has become more sensitive to questions of justice, peace and poverty. Organisations have grown up in defence of human rights, and the means of mass-communication have been widely used to propagate this new sense of human solidarity. Religious are them-

selves more clear on where their duty lies and the part they have to play in this movement to make ours a better world.

Apart from the challenge this presents to us religious, Pope Paul VI clearly presented in "Evangelii Nuntiandi" the nature of the problem:

"Between evangelisation and human advancement – development and liberation – there are in fact profound links. These include links of an anthropological order, because the man to be evangelised is not an abstract being but is subject to social and economic questions. There are also links in the theological order, since one cannot dissociate the plan of Creation fron the plan of Redemption. The latter plan touches the very concrete situations of injustice

to be combatted and of justice to be restored. They include links of the eminently evangelical order, which is that of charity: how in fact can we proclaim the new commandment without promoting in justice and peace the true authentic advancement of man?" (Ev. Nun. Ch 3, No. 31: C.T.S. London.)

More recently, the Union of Superiors-General, in June 1978, having spent four days reflecting on "THE COMMITMENT OF RELIGIOUS TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT", felt compelled to pass a resolution, which we consider sufficiently important to quote:

"As Superiors-General we see the full development of people as a very important task of our religious mission to the world. It is moreover our conviction that spiritual development is inseparable from human development, in its socio-economic and politicocultural aspects. We strongly support the legitimate aspirations of people to be self-sufficient and to decide their own destiny, while acknowledging their desire to grow in union with the most developed countries of the world.

"The poor of the world enjoy evangelical priority. With renewed determination, we wish to express our commitment to the realisation of their aspirations. That means for us new apostolic undertakings, in conformity with the needs and circumstances of time and place, as well as an effort on our part to make our rich brethren more aware of their responsibilities to those for whom life is a continual struggle. That demands that our religious communities be more flexible in facing up to the new needs. It requires also a greater readiness to re-evaluate our traditional apostolic works so that they may measure up more efficaciously to the requirements of the day.

"Finally, it is our conviction that the evangelical life calls us as members of Religious Institutes to play a prophetic and critical role. It is not however our intention to consider our-

selves an elite nor to assume a triumphalist attitude. The Gospel spirit truly lived has inevitably a prophetic aspect. Faced with forces destructive of man, it is our wish to proclaim the inherent dignity and value of the human person. Faced with a consumer society which enslaves, we wish to stress, by the simplicity of our lives, the true liberty of the children of God which should be found in spiritual and human values. Where so many of our brothers suffer injustice and evident oppression, we cannot be silent. We seek a response to their problems which is faithful to the principles of the Gospel and inspired by Christian charity. Above all, we recognise that the personal and collective witness of our way of life is essential to any prophetic role we may adopt".

No longer therefore may a religious hide behind some so-called statement of the Church in order to lead a quiet life and avoid being involved in the efforts made by his contemporaries. No longer may he blandly proclaim: "of course, for my part, I never meddle in politics". We see only too clearly how such abstentions, such silences, contribute to the continuance of unjust policies and regimes.

With "Populorum Progressio" the Church spoke out 10 years ago and has repeatedly intervened since in the same sense. And yet some to-day, with tongue in cheek and not without reason, say... that it is "Populorum Regressio" we should be writing about. It is easy to find excuses for this that let us off the hook. Thus: it is not our fault that the United Nations is powerless and that the gap grows between the rich nations and the poor; it is not our fault that some rulers of poor countries get rich so quickly: it is not our fault, as we know too well: the root of the evil is in the hearts of those who will not be converted!

"MY" Responsibility

WE KNOW... and yet, is it so sure that I can do nothing, that these matters are beyond me? Is it so sure that I am **not** looking for the easy way out?

"Good luck to the Prophets".

In face of such unacceptable situations, whether I see it or not, voices **have** been raised as witness to the Gospel or the dignity of man, such as those of Dr Martin-Luther KING and Mahatma GANDHI. Both rejected violent solutions, both died violently in defence of peaceful answers. Both were sustained by a faith, or at least a hope, that should be our own:

"Still I dream, thanks to this faith, that we shall be able to banish temptations to despair and to throw new light on the darkness of pessimism. Yes, thanks to this faith, we shall be able to hasten the day when peace will reign on earth and good will to men. That will be a wondrous day, the morning stars will sing together and the sons of God cry out with joy". (M-L. KING. The Real Revolution.).

Comfortably installed in an arm-chair, it is easy to admire such prophets, while reflecting: "excellent! Yes, I see his point of view but isnt he a little idealist"!

To which the answer is: "Certainly not"! Listen again to Martin-Luther KING, who wrote:

"I feel it impossible to have any affection for someone who attacks my home. I find it impossible to have sympathy for someone who exploits me. It is not possible for me to have sympathy for someone who crushes me under a burden of injustice. No! it is impossible to sympathetise with one who, day and night, seeks to kill me. And yet, Jesus reminds me that love is good-will, all-embracing, creative, redemptive, of all men. I believe it is there we take our stand as a people in our struggle for social justice. In this struggle we will never draw back but, in our action, we will never abandon the privilege that is ours: the privilege of loving.". (The Power of Love).

"The risk for me is too great!"

"Fine words butter no parsnips": how especially applicable that is to religious called to be witnesses of love. We must translate our belief in action.: faith without good works is dead, says the Apostle. At the same time, we may legitimately ask if active involvement may not be a danger to our faith or our religious consecration. Only a factual appraisal of

what has happened can answer that. And the facts appear to be as follows.

Concern for the social aspects of human affairs has given a new look to many traditional forms of apostolate. To-day, Spiritans are to be found in the great capital cities of Europe or America, engaged in the apostolate of immigrants, to take one example; and also in the depths of the forests of the Amazon, trying to protect the local Indians from exploitation by the powerful capitalist multi-nationals. They labour too in the basic communities of Paraguay, encouraging their people to develop in a manner worthy not only of their human dignity but also of their dignity as children of God: while in New York and the Bahamas others dedicate themselves to the service of groups of Haitians living in isolation an existence of inexpressible poverty and insecurity. Some of these confreres of ours have known what it is to be rejected by old friends in consequence of their election and have found new ones. But, whatever the cost to them, we can assert that the Mission has gained greater credibility because of their choice.

It would be puerile to think that such an apostolate, however faithful to the Gospel, could be carried out without problems and difficulties. Such commitments, undertaken in loyalty even to Christ's teaching, are often linked unfortunately (perhaps, it is a measure of our past failure) to political views and positions which are open to criticism. Sometimes too the sense of attachment to the Congregation falls into second place, and in recent years many defections may be traced to this. But, even well before this, how many problems arise: tensions and misunderstanding with confreres; criticism of institutions, even religious ones; questions of financial independence arising out of the earning of personal income and so on. The urgent needs of the poor has, at times, led to many over-simplifications, such as a certain distaste for serious or prolonged study. More seriously, conflicts with Governments, even with the local Hierarchy in some places, has put to the test not merely the human but the spiritual equilibrium of those in question.

Yes, there is no purpose in hiding the fact that the dangers do exist. But, our purpose in drawing attention to them, even with some degree of bluntness, is not to discourage those who have so bravely put themselves in the front line but rather to help them to see more clearly what the difficulties are, so that they may take all the means possible of reducing them to a minimum.

"Such questions are beyond me"!

That is readily understandable. Nevertheless. between blissful ignorance (or the easy answer!) and specialised knowledge there is room for a deeper examination of problems not considered in Seminaries 50, 25, even 15 years ago.

Reading an article on the increasing cost of primary materials and the consequences of that, am I moved to study and discuss the question or do I prefer to go along blindly as before?

Faced with the reality of inflation, unemployment, strikes and terrorism, am I willing to look for the

underlying causes?

Equally, while recognising that it is the fashion and rightly so - to criticise the Consumer Society. am I aware that at least in a certain type of society reduced consumption gives rise to problems of industrial paralysis and under-employment?

"All I can"!

There is evidently no wish to send all Spiritans to man the barricades in the struggle for justice, wherever it exists. The question we put is much more practical: "What can you do? What should you do: - to establish Christ's reign of Justice and of Peace on earth?'

"How should I act?"

In loyalty to the Church and our Religious Consecration.

Responsibility for the restoration of the temporal order in accordance with God's Plan falls upon the laity and not upon us. Neither will our place as religious in the modern world be more clearly determined by "a priori" definitions of what religious may or may not do by contrast with activities recognised as the proper concern of the layman.

We shall rediscover our specific role and proper identity rather by trying to read "the signs of the times" in the light of Faith. This will enable us to decide more easily at what levels and on what precise points we should intervene in temporal affairs in order to present more effectively the message confided to us. It is the global vision of the Church which should inspire us in our mission. It is that we are called to project in our consecrated lives and our social commitments at all times and without counting the cost to ourselves. To safeguard this Christian vision and the religious character of our vocation, while being involved in matters of their nature partial and contingent is probably our greatest challenge

To preserve this religious character of her mission and protect her apostolic freedom in promoting human development, the Church in consequence asks those (priests and religious) most closely associated with her mission to keep a prudent distance, sometimes even to abstain from involvement in certain activities. Amongst such activities might be classed those expressive of too personal or too prejudiced interests, those whose means to achieve their end are questionable, those suspect because of the particular historical context in which they take place. In summary, we are invited to refrain from engagement in activities less likely to give witness to the more spiritual, more absolute and transcendant values in human develop-This would apply more particularly to direct political action and especially leadership of or militant involvement in certain political parties or movements.

Though we should always live close to men and have their problems at heart, we must also live close to and have at heart what the Gospel requires of us. So, we should act independently of and above all social or political idealogies of left or right, which are often partial and prejudiced in their views, ambiguous and demanding of their adherents and can lead us away from our primary commitment.

Certainly, the radicalism of our religious witness, as testimony to Christ and because of these reservations, will be a sign of contradiction in the modern And yet, it is only in this way that it can be a sign of hope and liberation.

Looking Ahead: The General Chapter.

The General Chapter of 1980 proposes to focus attention on SPIRITAN LIFE. Our preparation for it should provide an opportunity to express our views on the charism and commitments of the Congregation, on the unity and plurality of these commitments and their authenticity as well as their community aspects.

As a Congregation, we have no reason to be ashamed of our record. We have seen in our visits to Provinces and Districts the continuation of a long and noble tradition of work for human development, for more just and humane conditions of life.

Nonetheless, we should work ever more closely with local organisations of Justice and Peace. We should be sensitive to the fact that in missions abroad we are usually foreigners. Decisions therefore should be made on a Community basis. However heroic inopportune personal prououncements may seem, however sincere, they are least likely to lead to the good solutions we desire.

In our Communities.

Given how wide-spread injustice is in the world to-day, it would be surprising indeed to find that all our communities were models of perfection in this respect. Let us question ourselves. Let us see if our criteria for evaluating our confreres and their work or for determining the working hours, conditions and salaries of those we employ, are in accordance with the Gospel? Is it not at this lowly level, first of all, that we give living authentic witness to Justice?

Our life-style too is something we should examine. Imported overseas, the way of life of rich countries risks becoming the ideal on which the developing countries model themselves.

And, what of our Vow of Poverty? Should it not also take into account the "signs of the times"? Our style of live will be truly prophetic only insofar as we understand the influences that condition the lives of our contemporaries.

Many communities in Europe, America, even Africa at times, make provision in their regulations for seeing Television News. This half-hour has become part of the daily ritual in place of the traditional "community recreation". Without wishing to pass judgement, it is surely in order to ask what effect the things we see and hear on T.V. have on our lives of prayer and fraternal exchange and on our commitments. Are we sufficiently critical in our approach to these powerful media of communication, which can at times influence our judgements and our ways of acting?

Is there not also a danger that, faced with possible commitments which concern the whole community, we say or do nothing lest we create tension between confreres: or conversely, the danger of imposing ideas in an atmosphere charged with emotion and passion? How often are judgements vitiated or stances taken too hastily because of prejudices of one kind or another.

On the Personal Level.

Each of us is a person in his own right and so, there can be no imposing a uniform way of thinking on all. Still, given our own personality, should we not be ready to question ourselves loyally before God and our confreres? How many are the opportunities missed, how many false certitudes retained, because we do not avail of the possibility of reflection, of questioning and of discussion provided us through meetings, lectures, slide-projections, film-shows, etc. Admittedly, many problems are very complex and it is all too easy to bury our heads in the sand rather than consider them objectively, with a readiness to learn and an effort to understand.

Again, I am painfully aware that some of my confreres have made choices, or undertaken commitments that I find difficult to understand and with which I disagree. Does that excuse me from maintaining charitable relations with them? And what if one day they decide to withdraw from the Congregation because of lack of fraternal contact or interest? Rather than say: "I told you so", should we not be at least a little disturbed that perhaps it is we who failed them.

It is true, not all our commitments are on the same level. In some dioceses missionaries have compromised themselves by their actions, and bishops by their statements. But, at least, each in his own area collaborates whole-heartedly in the interest of the poor and oppressed. Can we not have something of the same unity in our communities, centred around projects that are truly common? Rightly, "personal projects" have come in for criticism at times. Yet, to be fair, were some of them not an answer to an apostolic call, undertaken where those in authority had not the courage to take up a position: and have not some of them since been accepted and adopted by Provinces and Districts?

There are a thousand and one other practical problems which we cannot discuss now. What is important, what is essential always, is our readiness to accept with poverty and humility of spirit other people, other view-points, other ways of realising Christ's Mission; our readiness to be always open of mind and heart: "spiritanly" to be converted and live!

"Do not be obstinate in your ideas, do not be unyeilding" (N.D. 6, 322). "All inflexibility of will, all reliance on yourself and your own ideas must disappear, must be destroyed" (N.D. 13, 144). "Should it happen that you are not of the same opinion as your confreres, sink you own personal judgement in the judgement of the generality. Tenaciousness of one's own ideas is one of the greatest evils of men who live together" (N.D. 4, 458).

That's what Father Libermann asked of his followers. More recently, another prophet of his day challenges us in almost identical terms. Mgr Helder CAMARA (in the review, APORTAS, Bogota, Jan 1978) writes:

"History is inexorable; God, also, will demand an account of the graces we have received . . .

Let us learn the only true prudence, that of the Spirit. Let us learn to despise the prudence of the flesh, of egoism, of opportunism, of fear and the spirit of careerism and of compromise...

Let us at least have the courage to free ourselves from ourselves, from our egoism, our certitudes, our haloes of prestige and power, so that our option in favour of the poor and the oppressed be clearly defined." I/D 23

The Generalate Team

Sept.-Oct. 1979

Spiritan Works of Education

Reading a recent issue of *Spiritan News* (September 1978) it may have come as a surprise to many confreres to find that the Congregation was responsible for Dusquesne University, Pittsburgh, where there are about 8,000 students. In Trinidad there are two big Spiritan schools, in Canada there are two more, and in Germany the Congregation is responsible for one. In mission territories Spiritans have built and run scores of secondary schools and teacher-training colleges. Some provinces have a long commitment to works of education, dating back to the earliest

days of their foundation. However the question may be asked, what does an American university have to do with a missionary congregation? What has teaching in a fee-paying school got to do with 'poor and most abandoned souls'? The question is a thorny one, but in these days, when the Congregation seeks to renew itself and to return to its first fervour, part of its self-examination is to consider and evaluate its works. In this paper the General Council considers its works of education, especially in its 'old' provinces.

History

Our Founders

In 1703 Claude Poullart des Places founded the Congregation of the Holy Ghost to educate poor students for the priesthood who would dedicate their lives to the most difficult and most abandoned works in the Lord's vineyard. Their first work became the Holy Ghost Seminary. Later, in 1736, the Spiritans took charge of the major and minor seminaries of Meaux, which remained under their direction until 1807.

In the early days of the Society of the Immaculate Heart, **Libermann** was thinking of engaging his society in a work for the training of priests for Germany; how such a work for the 'poor Germans' could be reconciled with the ends of the Institute he explained in a letter to Le Vavasseur which has been lost (cf. ND II 377). When the Society of the Immaculate Heart became part of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, Libermann's responsibility was extended to the Colonial Seminary and to the staffing of the old French colonies. Not everybody agreed with the

fusion: Mgr Kobès and Mgr Bessieux feared that personnel needed in Africa would be diverted to the Seminary and the colonies. Libermann's experience with the Vicars Apostolic made him feel that the Congregation needed works in Europe to counterbalance their influence. If everybody went on the missions there would be nobody to keep the Congregation going at home: the Bishops would allow the return only of men who were of no use to them; the Congregation in Europe would be nothing more than a seminary for the missions. The Congregation needed works in Europe: there could be communities in the port towns to take care of the working class, of sailors, soldiers, galley-slaves and prisoners (cf. ND IX 289-292 passim). A house devoted to the poor in Brittany could also be used as a base for preaching missions (ND X 201). Some works could provide financial support for the works of formation: the salaries of thirty chaplains for the Navy would provide financial support as well as doing real good (ND XI 323). Personnel for such works could be found among those who had no particular taste for the missions and Spiritans with a strong missionary vocation should not be used in such works, at least

not for long periods (ND X 202). However no one should be accepted with the condition that he would be kept in France (ND XIII 172). Libermann always saw such works as ancillary to the main purpose of the Congregation.

There was a passage in the Provisional Rule which seemed to forbid works in Europe: The Congregation is destined for foreign and distant missions. Its subjects are never to be kept in Europe for the sole reason of employing them for the salvation of souls; some may stay in Europe but only for the good of the missions (RP Art. 1 Ch. 1). In his edition of the Réglements de la Congregation du Saint-Esprit (1849), Libermann was able to explain his position better: The general end of the Congregation is to devote itself to the salvation of sinners... Ministry which seeks to support and perfect pious sentiments in souls already established in Christian virtues should be considered as a secondary ministry. However if such kind of ministry has a certain importance in the advancement and support of the principal work, it can be undertaken with a care proportioned to the degree of importance seen in it... The specific end of the Congregation was 'poor and most abandoned souls' and Divine Providence had directed us to exercise our zeal and devotion in the foreign missions . . . Works in Europe should not however be given such importance that they would seriously injure the foreign missions, and priests should not be employed in them for a considerable time whose vocation was clearly for these missions (cf. op. cit. Ch. 1 passim).

Libermann felt the need for a strong home base; he saw the need to strengthen the life of the Congregation by undertaking works which would help it to expand and to consolidate; if the Vicars Apostolic needed men immediately they could ask other congregations for help. We would help them to the best of our ability without doing harm to the life of the Congregation. It was not enough for the Congregation "to do and die"; but we must do and keep alive to do again and keep on doing (cf. Mgr. le Roy: Le T.R.P. Frédéric le Vavasseur. p. 206, quoting a letter written for Libermann by le Vavasseur to Schwindenhammer).

Their Successors

The new Superior-General, Father Schwindenhammer (1852-81) opened the French Seminary shortly after the death of Libermann. Libermann had been thinking of taking on a major seminary in Cincinatti and Schwindenhammer was to have been the first rector (1850). The French Seminary was certainly not a work for 'the poor and most abandoned', even if at the time Holy Church had difficulty in finding apostolic labourers for it. Father Lannurien, its founder, had to defend it vigorously:

Libermann either betrayed his mission, trespassed the commission God had entrusted to him and given a mortal blow to his work... or acted in accordance with God's plans... if Libermann had been called by God to found a Congregation of missionaries only for abandoned souls it is difficult to see for what reason he gave him such extraordinary talents for spiritual guidance and training in the interior life... The gifts of grace possessed by Father Libermann appear to me as signs of the second purpose of his foundation and vocation, mainly that God had also destined his spiritual sons for the training of holy and zealous priests (Le Floc'h: Le Pêre Lannurien Rome 1910, quoted by Koren, The Spiritans, p. 128).

In the time of Libermann there had been no minor seminaries in the Congregation; the early members were from the ranks of the secular priesthood or from major seminaries. At the time, the accepted way to find vocations was to open apostolic schools. The Congregation was poor and it seemed a good idea to open seminary-colleges: the fees paid by the lay-boys would help to subsidise the education of the poor students for the missionary priesthood. Schwindenhammer founded seminary-colleges in France at Ploermel, Gourin, Cellule, Beauvais, Langogne, Gravelines, Merville, Mesnières and Rambervillers; in Ireland at Blackrock and Rockwell; in Germany at Marienstadt; in Portugal at Braga; in the United States at Pittsburgh, as well as colleges in Trinidad, Guadaloupe, Haiti and Pondicherry.

Father Emonet, Superior-General (1882-95) founded more seminary-colleges: in France at Epinal, Sessinet, Castelnaudary; in Ireland at Rathmines; in Portugal at Porto; in the Azores at Ponte Delgada; at Ballerat in Australia, at Para In Brazil and at Lima, Peru. Of these establishments some lasted only a few years or even months; some are still flourishing today. But the very number of these educational institutions (and we have not mentioned orphanages) would make one wonder whether the Congregation had taken on the education of youth as one of its principal Some have even suggested that Father Schwindenhammer was a sort of unrecognised John Bosco. However this was not the case: the schools were founded to consolidate and develop the Congregation and its work and to attract vocations; they were always seen as ancillary works which would help the main work of the Congregation, the evangelization of the poor and most abandoned.

During the generalate of **Archbishop Le Roy** (1896-1926), there were big changes in the educational involvement of the Congregation. Due in part to new tax laws in France, some of the educational institutions were proving more of a hindrance than a help in achieving the ends of the Congregation. The mandate given by the Chapter of 1896 to the new Superior-General included the following guideline:

Educational institutions which, after the payment of their staff and expenses, supply the Congregation with resources and vocations fall within the means foreseen for the attainment of our purposes. For this reason it is important to secure the prosperity of these houses by supplying them with a stable personnel that is devoted to this sort of work. The personnel must possess the required aptitudes and offer guarantees of the necessary competence, certified, when necessary by degrees (Circul. Mgr Le Roy No. 2, p. 20).

Archbishop Le Roy was not 'against the colleges', however. During his term of office St. Alexander's College was founded, first of all as an apostolic school for the Congregation and for needy dioceses and later it was opened to lay boys: it became the mother-house of the Province of Canada. In 1904 the Combes laws closed all colleges in France which were directed by religious Congregations. In 1910 anti-clerical laws closed Catholic schools in Portugal just as earlier Bismarck had closed schools in Germany. When Catholic schools were again permitted in France and Portugal the Congregation did not take back its former colleges. Some disappeared, some remained in government

hands and some were taken over by dioceses or by other congregations. It was considered wiser for the Congregation to open apostolic schools, membership of which would be restricted to boys who had expressed a wish to join the Congregation. It was felt perhaps that an apostolic school was a more suitable environment for nurturing vocations than a college.

In Ireland there was question of closing Rockwell and St. Mary's, Rathmines. The Archbishop of Cashel wrote a strong letter to the Superior-General warning

him of the displeasure of the Irish Bishops if Rockwell were closed and mentioning that he considered Rockwell as the minor seminary of his diocese. St. Mary's Rathmines was closed in 1916 but pressure from diocesan authorities and the Catholic laity caused its reopening in 1926. The two incidents bring into relief a general principle: even if the Congregation sees a work as merely a supporting work of its special purpose, it is still a part of the universal mission and the local church has a part in the dialogue.

Our Works of Education Today and Tomorrow

In the course of nearly five years of visits, the General Council has come to understand better the importance of the school apostolate in certain provinces of the Congregation. They are ancillary works in the service of the Congregation's main purpose. Our present schools, our Dusquesne University, are works of the Congregation and are works of which we can legitimately be proud. We foresee a greater rôle of the Catholic laity in the conduct of our schools, and a more pastoral rôle for Spiritans engaged in them. But educational work is a way to live and carry out the Spiritan charism and the Congregation accepts this form of work as an integral part of the mission of the Congregation.

Schools which are professionally competent

Education is a value in itself: it has its own laws, its own justification, its own finality. Catholic schools should be good schools, as good as any in Tckyo, Los Angeles or Moscow. Within the limits of our capacity to judge, it seems to us that our Spiritan schools are run in a professional and competent manner.

Christian Schools

A Catholic school must do much more than achieve academic success. If it does only this, it loses its specifically Christian characteristic, which is its reference to a Christian concept of life, centred on Jesus Christ. As schools get bigger and more impersonal, as religious practice declines, even in traditionally Catholic areas, there is an increasing danger that Catholic schools will become indistinguishable in ethos from other schools. Today there is a strong current of secularism; if a Catholic school is to be Christian in fact as well as in name, it must go against this current. A Catholic school should proclaim the good news; it should train its students knowingly as children of God. The Catholic school should be a faith-community of teachers, parents and children, a community which evangelizes itself and evangelizes others in the larger community of which it is a part. To be fully secular, it must be Christian as well.

Schools which favour Christian vocation

Up to about twenty years ago, large numbers of Spiritans came from apostolic schools or Catholic secondary schools. After the Council there was a belief that 'late vocations' would become more numerous, and become the rule rather than the exception. Teday the paths that bring young mon

to the major seminary or to the Congregation are more diverse than before. Final commitments are made later in life, but answers to questionnaires suggest that the first seeds of a vocation are often sown in late childhood or early teens. In Europe and America today there is a famine of vocations, but there are some indications that vocations from secondary school level are beginning to increase again. However small the number of vocations that come from a congregation's own schools, they do provide a nucleus which attract other young men. God's hands are not tied by sociological change, he still calls boys to his service.

Traditionally a Catholic school has been judged by the number of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life that come from it. In the past Christian vocation was taken for granted, perhaps too much for granted. Everybody has a vocation from God. The Catholic school today should provide an environment which favours the discernment of vocation, lay, religious and presbyteral. It should do more: it should provide an environment which positively helps the student to answer his personal call by God and it should protect his vocation, accompany it and strengthen it. The school community should provide an environment of liturgical and personal prayer, and, dare we say it, provide spiritual guidance for its students.

Schools which are missionary

The whole Church is missionary, a Catholic school should be missionary and especially a school for which a missionary congregation is responsible. A Spiritan school should be in solidarity with the purpose of the Congregation; it should accept it; it should help it. Young people are impressionable. Unconsciously they accept the values of their teachers, not so much the values they profess but the values they are seen to live by. Pistures on the wall,

audiovisual presentations, lectures and prayer-groups can be of great value in instilling in students a missionary spirit and in providing a dimension to their lives which goes beyond that of worldly success and prosperity. Young people are generous and idealistic and a Spiritan school should nurture their spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice. Our students should be trained to be missionaries in the home church and abroad, as laymen or as religious missionaries.

Schools which are concerned for the poor

A Congregation which was founded for the poor and most abandoned must take into special account the words of the recent Roman document, *The Catholic School* (1978).

First and foremost the Church offers its educational services to 'the poor and those who are deprived of family help and protection and those who are far from the faith... Since education is an important means of improving the social and economic condition of individuals and peoples, if the Catholic school were to turn itself exclusively and predominantly to those from the wealthier social classes it could be contributing towards maintaining their privileged position and could thereby continue to favour a society which is unjust (op. cit. Par. 58). It may be true that in the context the words 'Catholic School' refer to the Catholic school system as a whole and not to an individual school, but the passage may have a certain relevance for Spiritans. Today when it is becoming clear that the rich nations are oppressing the poor nations, the Catholic school has the duty to conscientize its students against this oppression and in favour of justice and peace in the world.

Our Common Spiritan Vocation

Throughout our history there has always been tension between the demands of the mission and the

needs of the home works. From the time of Libermann there has hardly been a missionary bishop who did not complain of men being kept at home, especially for school work. Perhaps the balance was not always kept and sometimes men were kept in schools to the detriment of the missions. However many hundreds of missionaries, thousands even, did come from our schools, and in these days of famine we should not forget this. Then there were always Spiritans who found they did not have a taste for missionary work abroad; there were many who had a true vocation for missionary work who were kept at home against their will, and there were men whose health did not stand up to foreign climates and who were able to work happily and usefully in home works.

In the Congregation there has always been a certain hierarchy in our Spiritan commitments: some men are in the front line, some are in logistics, some are in the commissariat, some in training schools, some in field hospitals. In the course of a Spiritan's life he may find himself in many work-situations: the man who has spent years in first evangelization may find himself in school-work at home or even in a parish in his home diocese.

Some are apostles, some are teachers, some know many languages; some work at first evangelization among the Masai or in Northern Cameroun, others work in administration or in education. Each in his own work-situation should be faithful to the common vocation of the Congregation, and every Spiritan work should contribute to the specific end of the Congregation. Each should be interested in the work of the other, understand it and support it. The man who is working poor among the poor needs the support and sympathy of the the man in a more comfortable situation, and the man at home needs the sympathy and support of those in frontier situations. If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it, if one part is given special honour, all parts enjoy it. Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it (1 Cor. 12, 26-27).

A SPIRITAN SCHOOL DEFINES ITS PURPOSE:

The French Province conducts three small junior-secondary schools: Neufgrange, Blotzheim and Allex, which were formerly apostolic schools in the strict sense. In a circular sent to parents in 1978, the Ecole des Missions de Blotzheim defines it nature, its purpose and its style of life:

The Ecole des Missions is a junior secondary school, a boarding school of 120 boys. Its purpose is to give a human and Christian education and to accompany priestly and missionary vocations. It seeks to open its students to 'the other' and to the Third World. Its team of educators includes Spiritans, religious sisters and Christian laity...

The common life of the school requires from the pupils generosity and a spirit of caring for others and openness to them... The Christian school which is ours presupposes that the parents accept Jesus Christ and his Church and desire a good religious education for their children. The boy himself will accept our style of life, which includes expressions of faith, prayers, Eucharistic and other celebrations and careful religious instruction. Since for many years the school was specially intended for boys with a religious missionary vocation, the school gives special welcome to boys who are thinking of giving themselves totally to the service of the Church and the Third World...

We think it indispensible that the parents agree with our stated aims. Nor does the admission of a boy dispense the parents from their duty as the educators of their son. Indeed they are invited to work with the headmaster and the teachers, to interest themselves in the activities of the school and to participate actively in various functions and meetings...

I/D 24

The Generalate Team

Nov.-Dec. 1979

The Congregation Today and Tomorrow

I - The Congregation Today

"How important it is to stress the penitential aspect of a Chapter! It means a serene and profound examination of conscience, with a consequent change of mentality and life; and it means a painful search for God's will in the present exigencies of consecrated life » (Cardinal PIRONIO, 3 Sept. 1976).

How can a Congregation of almost 4,000 members examine its conscience and repent of its sins? How can it put off the old man, put on the new, and follow Christ in holiness of life?

We are told that when Jonas preached to Nineveh, a city so great that it took three days to walk through it, "the people of Nineveh believed in God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least... And God relented: He did not inflict on them the disaster he had threatened". The answer seems to be that all must repent, "from the greatest to the least". The Congregation means us: it is you and I who must repent. The sociologists threaten us with disaster: only a small proportion of religious institutes which like us embark on the steep slope of declining numbers finally survive. "The time is short" (1 Cor. 7:29).

Among the tasks set us in 1974 was that of visiting every Spiritan circumscription. During the space of more than five years we have met most Spiritans, held long conversations with many, and attended chapters and meetings of all kinds. We have seen something of the extraordinary variety of our life and work. Spiritans live in a changing world and a changing Church: in different Churches and indeed in different worlds. Like our confreres we are trying to read the signs of the times, and to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Churches and to our small ecclesial community.

In this paper we attempt some comments on the state of the Congregation as we see it in these last months of our mandate. In the next paper we attempt to foresee the future.

"A community at once holy and sinful"

How should a Spiritan look at his Congregation, this "fraternal community" to which he was "called by Christ to share with him the great work of the salvation of the world" (Règlement, 1849, II, 1). He should see it as Vatican II sees the Church: a community at once holy and sinful, always in need of being purified, incessantly pursuing the path of penance and renewal (cf. L.G. 8). God, we are sure, casts a loving gaze on us: sees us for what we are, sinners and useless servants; loves us for His grace

in us, loves us for what we can become, sees His son Jesus in us better than we can ourselves. When men sit in judgement, they are harsh and impatient and condemnatory; and their first step in reform is to destroy. God is patient, waits for the harvest, and reserves it to himself to judge who is cockle and who is wheat. Each of us was generous when he first answered the call of Christ: "Fight the good fight of the faith and win for yourself the eternal life to which you were called when you made your profession and spoke up for the truth in front of many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12). The Congregation we are about to describe is made up of people like Timothy.



Fig. 1:
PERCENTAGE OF THOSE
OVER AND UNDER THE AGE OF 50.

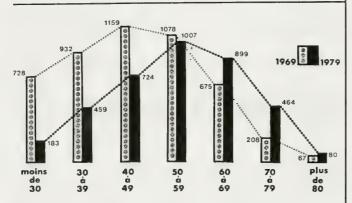


Fig. 2: EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF SPIRITANS ACCORDING TO AGE-GROUPS.

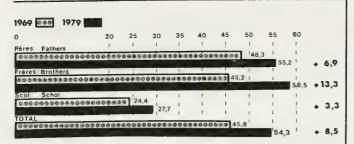


Fig. 3: INCREASE IN AVERAGE AGE ACCORDING TO CATEGORIES.

An aging group, declining in numbers

The young man Timothy grew old. In the last ten years the average age of Spiritans has risen from 45.8 years to 54.3 years (fig. 3). Those under 50, who made up more than half the Congregation ten years ago, make up only just over a third now (Fig. 1). The age-group 50-59 has remained at about 1,000 members, but we have many more older men than we had in 1969: the age-group 60-69 has increased from 675 to 899, and that of the over-70's from 275 to 544 (Fig. 2). Taking into account the time spent in initial formation, any hoped-for increase in recruitment will not take effect for about ten years. The average life-span of Spiritans is 68.5 years. Thus we can make an informed guess that in ten years' time the Congregation will be less than half the size it was in 1964, when it reached its numerical peak (5,100). However, let us take heart! The army of Gideon was reduced from 32,000 to 300, and yet its efficiency was not thereby impaired: the Lord delivered Midian into its power.

For the next 25 years the Congregation will need to invest more personnel and finance in the care of the aged. After this period, provision for the aged

will be less needed. A Congregation which recruited hundreds of young men per year in the forties and fifties has to accept the fact that forty years later they will be beginning to get old and infirm, and this irrespective of the rate of recruitment of younger Spiritans. The apostolic effectiveness of a Spiritan does not decline with age, however, if we accept the Libermannian definition of the apostolic life as "that life of love and holiness which the Son of God lived on earth to save and sanctify souls and by which he continually sacrificed himself to the glory of his Father for the salvation of the world" (Reglement, 1849, II, 1). When a Jesuit retires he is given as his special work to pray for his Society. If we wish to take the standards of the multinationals, however, a group which has 1,201 members between the ages of 30 and 49 is in good shape by their demographic standards.

A young Congregation, with hope for the future

A Congregation will always look to the number of students in formation as an indication of its general health. If our Congregation is aging, this is due in large part to the fact that its major source of recruitment in the past was in Europe and North America, where the local Churches appear to be in a period of decline. In the context of these Churches, the level of our recruitment seems average, and in some cases above average. We must confidently hope that a new period of renewal is at hand for these Churches; in the meantime, we can take comfort in the fact that we have 193 students in post-secondary formation in Europe, and 38 in North America, and that the Province of Poland reopened its novitiate in 1976 and today has 12 scholastics and 12 novices.

The growth area in the Congregation today is however in Africa and South America. There is a total of 159 students in formation in Africa, in the Provinces of Nigeria and Angola, and in the new foundations of East Africa, West Africa and Central Africa. In Brazil, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Paraguay there is a total of 33. Thus of a total of 447 post-secondary students in formation, including postulants, novices and scholastics, 231 come from the Western World, 24 from Eastern Europe and 192 from the Third World. The Congregation of tomorrow will be more interracial in composition than it is today.

"Preaching the gospel to those who have not heard the message of Christ"

Fifty years ago, the great majority of Spiritans in Africa were working in first evangelization. Today the number engaged is much smaller. Kilimanjaro is the District most engaged in this work today, where our confreres work among the Masai and the Warusha. Other groups are working in Taboucunda in Senegal, among the Borana of Ethiopia, in Northern Cameroun, and, quite recently, among the tribal peoples in Pakistan.

"Aiding the young Churches"

If few Spiritans are now working in first evangelization, a large part of the reason is the success of our work in the past. Spiritans "have preached the word of God and brought forth Churches". Today 1,249 Spiritans in Africa are "aiding the young Churches to enable them to reach a certain stability and firmness". The practical consequences of the ending of the Jus Commissionis are now taking

effect. Excepting certain areas, we have passed from a period when the direction and planning of the Church was largely in the hands of one missionary group to one in which the pioneer group is merely one religious congregation among many, each of which according to its proper charism is at the service of the Church and aids it to achieve its own objectives.

A new form of presence

The transition has not been without its tensions: some missionaries have obeyed to the letter the request of some articles and books: "Pack your bags and go". While a certain disengagement by expatriate missionaries, a disengagement more mental than physical, may have been required to further the autonomy of the local Churches, today perhaps the time has come to stress the help and encouragement which can be given to a local Church by the discreet and humble presence within it of a religious congregation which performs its special ministry of service.

"The religious life should be fostered right from the planting stage of the Church. Not only does it give a precious and absolutely indispensable aid to missionary activity but, by a more inward consecration made to God in the Church, it manifests and makes clear the inner nature of the Christian calling" (A.G. 18).

Building Christian communities

In Africa today, the stress is less on the geographical extension of mission stations, less on the building of churches, hospitals and schools, and more on the building of local Christian communities and on the training of lay leaders. The period has come of consolidation in the faith, of the building of spiritual houses out of living stones (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5). Learning this new building trade is more demanding than the old: Spiritans are finding that to be efficacious builders of Christian communities they must live a community life of shared prayer, reflection and work, and that they are called to a greater interiority in prayer life. The pastor who lives alone and prays alone is handicapped in his efforts; his monarchical position in the community does not favour an understanding of community either in himself or in others. Today the pastor is called, not so much to be a leader in the community, as to facilitate and to discern the charism of leadership in others. One of the signs of vitality in the Congregation today is the manner in which various Spiritan communities, in small humble ways, have improved their presence and action within their deanery or diocese.

New missionary initiatives in the Young Churches

In Africa the greatest number of our confreres are now engaged in the pastoral care of the faithful. However, as the number of religious and diocesan clergy increases, we no longer have the responsibility of staffing every work. Thus we become free to accept works more fully in keeping with our special purpose. The pace of urbanization is rapidly increasing. Are we not called to make a greater contribution to the evangelization of the hundreds of thousands of poor in the 'favelas', the shanty towns of the great African cities? Could we not throw

ourselves more energetically into the struggle for Justice and Peace? Nor should we forget the areas of first evangelization which still remain in countries where we have worked for over a century.

Another large group of Spiritans are "preaching the gospel in those regions where, in the judgement of the Church, circumstances call for the renewal of missionary activity" (CDD 3c). These are the Spiritans working in the five Districts of Brazil, and in the groups of Paraguay and Mexico. The Churches of Central and South America are older than the young Churches of Africa, but today they show the dynamism of a renewed youth. The influence of Medellin and Puebla carries the Spiritans with its impetus, and extends far beyond the continent, giving hope to the universal Church. If, twenty years ago, circumstances called for a renewal of missionary activity, these Churches are renewing themselves, and their influence is helping in the renewal of other Churches. A sign among others of this renewal is the new Spiritan foundation in Brazil, which already has 20 in formation and 4 novices.

The Provinces

"The Provinces accomplish their task by fostering a missionary spirit, by seeking and training missionaries, and by taking care of them when they return temporarily or definitively" (CDD 191).

Besides formation and the care of the aged, most Provinces have a considerable investment in missionary animation and vocation work. Missionary animation today is more often effected in cooperation with the national or diocesan branches of the Pontifical Mission-Aid Societies. The Chapter of 1974 opened the way for Spiritan works among immigrants and foreign students. Libermann would have approved. Today such works are often the project of small Spiritan communities which are centres of welcome and prayer, and which are consequently attractive of missionary vocations.

The traditional works

Besides the newer and smaller communities, there are larger communities engaged in traditional works: schools, colleges and orphanages. In these works the average age of Spiritans is so high as to call for a drastic change in the level of Spiritan participation in such works. Orphanages are directly works for the poor. Catholic schools and colleges have been traditionally productive of missionary vocations. However varied the paths which lead to a religious commitment today, the majority pass through the environment of a Catholic school. Because of lack of personnel, it may be necessary to withdraw completely from some of these works, and painful decisions may have to be made. A smaller and more pastorally efficient Spiritan presence may transform others. Men grow old and die, but institutions can be renewed, to last for many centuries.

Parochial work in the Provinces

There are many Spiritans working in pastoral situations in Europe and North America, a phenomenon which hardly existed until recent years. Most have spent long years on the missions some are

old beyond the usual age of retirement; many have been expelled from the missions where they had been working. Among them is a small number of young or relatively young men who one hopes will return to a work closer to the special work of the Congregation. In Nigeria the expulsion of the Irish Spiritans forced the young Nigerian Province to come to the assistance of the local dioceses: without the Nigerian Spiritans many very large parishes would have been without priests. However large the present number of confreres in ordinary parochial situations, this does not imply any change of orientation on the part of the Congregation. The phenomenon is a temporary one, closely related to the present high average age in the Congregation and to the changing pattern of missionary commitment in the young Churches. The confreres who, with the approval of their superiors, are working in such parochial situations are part of the missionary service of the Congregation (G.A. 2).

Service of the Poor

Not every Spiritan can spend his whole life working directly within the special work of the Con-Nevertheless it is important that the gregation. Congregation, which means every Spiritan, keep a delicate conscience on the matter of work situations. If the Congregation is to renew itself, it should be faithful to old works, and undertake new works, for the poor and for the evangelization of those who have not heard the gospel. Such works present a challenge, and if we are to be apostolically efficacious in them, we have to renew ourselves in faith, in poverty of spirit and in prayer. If a Spiritan undertakes to live poor among the poor, he will either give up the work after a while, or the work he does will help to make him more poor in spirit, more Christ-like. If a Spiritan chooses a comfortable work for himself, he will become more fond of himself, more attached to money and its comforts. What is true of the individual is also true of the Congregation: the work we do helps to make us what we are.

Personal Project and Congregation Project

During the last five years, much of our time has been given to the discernment of missionary priorities at various levels. But it is one thing to know a work is important; it is another to find someone to do it. The Spiritan Rule says that each should be "paratus ad omnia", ready for any work. We have found from experience that some confreres are not ready to accept new appointments. Some are immovable, like standing stones or menhirs. Others are in pursuit of self-fulfilment. Others again feel so personally responsible and indispensable in the work they are doing that they forget that the responsibility is more corporate than personal; that it is less his own than that of the Congregation which sent him there in the first place. While the Congregation must discern, favour, and make fruitful the personal charisms of its members, it is nevertheless with the Congregation and within its common project that each member fulfils his personal charisms. If

gifts are truly charisms of the Holy Spirit they do not conflict with each other, but work together in harmony to build up the body of Christ.

Universal Church, Local Church, Congregation

Some Spiritans emphasise the special work of the Congregation to the extent of forgetting the legitimate objectives of the local Church; others see the rôle of the Congregation as limited to the sending of personnel to a local Church to which from henceforth all their obedience is due. Others again see themselves as a missionary arm of their own local Church, and their province of origin as an independent missionary-sending society. We think such opinions are wrong in that they omit one or other point in a a full perspective. There are three points of reference for a Congregation such as ours: Church of origin, Church of insertion and the Church universal. Our collaboration with the local Churches should be maintained in line with our special vocation or charism: obedience to the local Church cannot be substituted for obedience to the Congregation. Spiritans are in a local Church because the Congregation sent them there; but while they are there they owe obedience to the local Ordinary. The two obediences are not contradictory but complementary. Mission is in the heart of the Blessed Trinity. The Father sends the Son; the Son sends the Church. Church discerns and recognises the charisms of the various religious congregations, each of which enriches her life, and she gives each Congregation its mission. It is in the context of this global mission that an individual Spiritan can speak of being 'sent' or being 'invited' or being 'at the service' of a particular local Church.

A Congregation which has renewed itself in Christ

Let us imagine ourselves in ten years' time, if the Chapter of 1980 was truly the agent of renewal for the whole Congregation. What would things be like? What would we be like? We will be fewer in numbers, and ten years older. We will be more missionary, more apostolic, more prayerful, less attached to our own comfort and to our own will. Some of us will have been too old to be uprooted. We are now working in various situations, some closer, some farther away from the Congregation's main work: our renewal will take the form of being more apostolic, more missionary, more selfless, more loving towards God and men in our future work situation.

In practice, how will this renewal show itself? In signs, sensible signs. There will be no more private bank accounts or private cars; we will be spending more time at community and personal prayer. We will be taking on more apostolic work, instead of being curled up in armchairs, watching television. We will be thinking less of our own private affairs, of doing our own thing. We will be part of, and working in solidarity with, the project of the Congregation. Many of us will have left more comfortable situations, to work poor among the poor or in frontier missionary situations. Like the man the Samaritan found naked and wounded on the road to Jericho, we will be in convalescence: our wounds will be healed but the scars will be there. We will still be ourselves, limping somewhat, but in our lives and our work we will be faithful to our missionary vocation, and our example, we hope, will attract many to join us.

I/D 25

The Generalate Team

February 1980

The Spiritans Today and Tomorrow

2. Tomorrow: "The things to come."

"No need to recall the past, no need to think about what was done before. See, I am doing a new deed, even now it comes to light; can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the wilderness, rivers in the wilds" (Isaiah 43:18-19).

The Generalate Team is coming to the end of its mandate. With this, our last 'I/D', we would like to look towards the future with you, towards this "new deed that is coming to light". With you we would like to get a glimpse of the future, starting from today's signs. With you we would like to share our hope, in the strength of which we will have the courage, all together, to make the conversions that are necessary. Together too, we will set out, on a road that looks rather as if it will lead through the desert. This road that history calls us to take will be another exodus, as it were, like the exile and return of the Chosen People (Isaiah, Chaps. 40-55 and 56-66).

"The islands put their hope in me . . ." (Is. 51:5).

Tomorrow's World

What will be "the things to come" in the world to be evangelized?

- The WORLD POPULATION, we are told, will grow from its present 4.5 billion to 6 or 7 billion by the year 2000. The greatest increase will be in the continents of the Third World. There will also be an increase of poverty, hunger, unemployment and insecurity. A clear challenge here for the Church's Mission.
- ASIA alone, by the year 2000, will have 65% of the world's population. One person in six will be Indian, one person in five will be Chinese. And this continent of Asia, by far the most populous, will have by far the smallest percentage of Christians a mere 3% another enormous challenge for tomorrow's Mission.
- Growing URBANIZATION too will be a challenge for the Mission. By the year 2000 the urban population will be greater than the rural population. São Paulo, for example, had a population of 3 million in 1950; today it has more than 10 million; and by the year 2000 it will have 25 million. This shift from the countryside to the towns, we are told, will only increase the number of the poor. What will be the scale of the urban apostolate?
- The "CRY OF THE POOR", so strong already today, will make itself heard still more in the future. Without a radical change, a minority (24%) will get richer and richer, and

the majority (76%) will get poorer and poorer. It is thought that by the end of the century 600 million people will be living in 'absolute poverty' — not to mention those suffering from injustice, oppression and exploitation on the part of various governments and ideologies of the Right or the Left. Care for ALL of these 'poor' will urge the Mission, in the framework of 'Justice and Peace', to ever greater and more courageous commitment.

Other factors that will influence tomorrow's Mission are: the YOUNG, who already make up more than half of the Third World's population; the Young Nations' insistence on the recognition of their IDENTITY and real INDEPENDENCE; the further increase in MATERIALISM and SECULARIZATION; the need to MIGRATE, because of population pressures in poor countries; and the demand for CONSUMER GOODS, as an expression of wellbeing, for both rich and poor.

In the face of a future that was still not clear, Vatican II had stressed ecumenism, dialogue with non-Christian religions, recognition of true values in 'traditional' religions, the incarnation and inculturation of the Gospel, and a catechesis adapted to the mentalities and social structures of those to be evangelized. The Council was right, and in taking up those positions it provided clear directives for tomorrow's Mission. It remains true, however, that, in a world that is rapidly evolving, these directives, clear though they are, will necessarily be subject to adaptation and adjustment.

"Lift up your eyes and look round ... " (Is. 60:4).

Tomorrow's Mission

With its calls and challenges, tomorrow's world will make the Church's mission certainly wider, and probably more difficult, than in the past. Here too "a new deed is coming to light", with its promise of a new epoch: the RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH AND OF ITS MISSION.

- Our generation has already begun to experience the SHIFT OF THE CHURCH towards the southern hemisphere. Before long the numerical centre of gravity of Christianity will have decidedly shifted to the south: the Catholics of the Third World already make up 50% of the Church's membership; by the year 2000 they will make up 70%, as against the 30% in Europe and North America.
- The Church's CENTRES OF VITALITY are also shifting. It looks as if, in the near future, their order of importance will be: in Latin America, Africa, Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania. It is likely that the sources of missionary drive, especially as regards the universal Mission, will also be in the order just given. The mission-sending areas, therefore, will be growing in number and becoming more varied.
- The MONOPOLY OF MISSION which hitherto belonged to Europe and North America is already breaking: the local Churches, young and old,

- now share, in a collegial way throughout the world, in the task of local and universal evange-lization. "Lift up your eyes and look round": the partners in mission work are multiplying and diversifying.
- The "TREASURES OF THE NATIONS" the Christian originality of the different Churches are more and more appreciated and shared. Latin America, for instance, is bringing to the whole Church its basic communities, its theology of liberation, its commitment to the poor. its sense of popular religion; Africa is bringing its strong sense of community (of small communities especially), its search for different kinds of ministry, its festive liturgy, its enthusiasm for the Bible; Asia is contributing its sense of the sacred and its love of prayer and contemplation, silence and the interior life. All of these elements add to the traditional riches of Christianity. Dialogue, sharing, exchange and communion, then, are for all the partners in Mission, whether young or old.

These factors and many others will influence tomorrow's Mission. Each Church will keep its own priorities, because of its own needs in incarnating the Gospel in its area. But one can already see the outline of the overall picture: greater SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR, summoning us to both specific action on their behalf and to greater poverty in our own lives; more UNIVERSALITY, as asked for in Evangelii Nuntiandi; and a search for SPIRITUAL RENEWAL, unifying incernation and contemplation.

"I am making a road in the wilderness . . . " (Is. 43:19)

The Congregation Tomorrow

For our Congregation, as for the world and the Church's Mission, the future is "coming to light". The spirit of our Founders, the history of the Congregation and the present experience of Spiritans, far from being eliminated by the new factors, must be brought to bear on the fresh challenges that face us. Thus the three elements that are emerging as important for tomorrow's Mission, at the level of the Churches, are also those that should characterize our Congregation: POVERTY, UNIVERSALITY, and RELIGIOUS LIFE. All religious institutes that are missionary will have to build on these elements in their past and present, in order to construct the future.

Poor

"The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me... to bring good news to the poor"

(Is. 61:1).

For us Spiritans, as for the whole Church, the immediate future seems to be a difficult passage, somewhat like that of the grain of wheat, which must fall into the ground and die if it is to grow again and produce a harvest. The Congregation, faced as it is with decreasing numbers and increasing demands, will have to take stock of its present commitments and decide on new directions.

Some Provinces have already embarked on this road and, while maintaining their past commitments, show a vitality that enables them to respond to new appeals too: missionary animation, migrants, abandoned minorities, action for 'Justice and Peace', and the commitment of personnel to the Congregation's stated priorities.

In some of our missionary Districts too, there are not merely hopeful signs but there is real adaptation to the changing conditions. The building up of basic communities, the training of lay leaders, the promotion of local priestly, religious and missionary vocations—all of this contributes to the development of the local Churches, which, more and more, will be self-sufficient in future.

If the Church's centres of vitality are shifting, if partners in missionary work are multiplying, and if mission-sending areas are becoming more varied, it follows that our own 'missionary ways' too must change, diversify and multiply.

If the cry of the poor is to be heard still more loudly tomorrow, especially in the cities, it will challenge us more urgently and directly.

If there are to be practical steps for a new evangelization of the poor, if atheism, materialism, secularization, Marxism and consumerism are to play a larger part in tomorrow's research, then we too should diversify our research. With other missionary institutes, we

must accept the challenges, whether they come from Asia, from countries now closed to the Gospel, or from the still numerous areas of first evangelization.

To avoid each Church closing itself in on its own 'treasure', we should be men of communion, dialogue and sharing throughout the Churches.

The Spiritans will walk on the road to the future if, in the present phase of evaluation and new choices, they fix their eyes more clearly and firmly on the POOR, and decide to live "poor with the poor". Such a solidarity with them, and for them, will renew us in our evangelical commitment to poverty. In this way "the poor will evangelize us".

In the poor we shall meet Christ, who lived as a poor man and identified with them. In the poor, for whom the Good News was destined, we shall be with God's chosen ones. In the poor, in whose footsteps Christ walked all His life, we shall walk in the footsteps of Christ.

Our poverty is not an end in itself; it is first of all APOSTOLIC. "Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty" (2 Cor. 8:9). This poverty will express itself in different ways in different circumstances. For example, as Fr. Arrupe, Superior General of the Jesuits, has said, "the greatest service that religious can offer men today is an austere and frugal life that refutes the premises of the consumer society".

Beyond even the apostolic witness of our poverty in today's, and still more tomorrow's, mission, we shall feel the need for INTERIOR POVERTY. Through the break that it requires in the very heart of our habits, through the realization that we are foreigners (and at times barely tolerated foreigners) in certain situations, through the spirit of adaptation that we need in order to welcome new partners, through the tansions experienced between the projects of

the local Church and the common project of the Congregation, tomorrow's missionary will be more like the poor and humble Christ predicted in Isaiah's poems on the Servant of Yahweh: "Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights..." (Is. 42:1).

Universal

"Widen the space of your tent..."

(Is. 54:2)

The countless challenges that call us today to reappraise, to make new choices, to give new directions to our fidelity, call us too to reexamine our long-standing commitment to universality. Here too we must be universal in a different way.

To the growing number of Catholics in the southern hemisphere corresponds, for the Congregation, the growing number of Spiritans from Where there were only the Third World. Districts before, Provinces have been set up. Others will soon be added to them, starting with the recent Foundations in Africa. Africa and Latin America priestly and religious missionary vocations are on the increase. On present estimates, Spiritan novices from the Third World will probably be more numerous than those of the older Provinces by 1980 Will it not mean, as for the Church, a shift in the Congregation's centres of vitality? Will Spiritans from the Third World become more numerous eventually than those from the older Provinces? Such a diversity of Spiritans would indeed be a pledge for the future and a happy necessity.

With the Third-World Provinces and Foundations, our missionary base is renewing itself, and is already changing our structures — a process that will increase in the future. The former Irish District of Eastern Nigeria is now a Province with a hundred African Spiritans, and is sending missionaries to other countries as well as within Nigeria. The three Portuguese Districts in Angola have become a single Province. Before long, the flourishing East African Foundation, which cuts across the Districts of Kenya and Tanzania and sends young African Spiritans as missionaries to Zambia, will become

an "international Province", breaking through the structures of the Districts. The future will no doubt offer a similar development in the other Foundations.

More important than questions of structure, these foreseeable changes will require a change of mentality, a new way of looking at Mission, and even a new way of life. Will the Congregation, i.e. Spiritans as a whole, be able to appreciate these "treasures of the nations" brought by the Spiritans of the Third World? As in the Church as a whole, there is enrichment here, but also a call and a challenge. The road to the future, the road of our 'exodus', that of the poor, "with the poor and for them", is also the road of welcome, of sharing, of communion between all Spiritan brothers, new and old, of all continents. However small may be the part that we are called to play in the service of the Church and the world of the future, we think that it is by taking this road that we shall best be able to fulfil it.

Religious

"Turn to me and be saved" (Is. 45:22).

During the past five years we have so often stressed the importance of a solid religious life, to meet the needs of today and tomorrow, that some of you have said: "Enough", or "You are taking refuge in the spiritual". We apologize for any clumsiness there may have been in our way of expressing ourselves, but it remains true that the 'exodus' must be made WITH GOD. For today's mission and tomorrow's, for the conversions within ourselves that we shall have to make in order to correct our present shortcomings, religious renewal, on both the personal and community level, is an essential. And there is no question here of introducing division into our Spiritan life, but rather of unifying it.

Our preaching of Christ, our apostolate today and tomorrow, is a WAY OF LIFE. As Libermann said: "The apostolic life is the life of love and holiness that the Son of God lived on earth to save and sanctify souls" (Règlements, 1849). Our life must be apostolic, and our apostolate must be our way of life.

"Seek the Lord while he is still to be found . . . "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways — it is the Lord who speaks" (Is. 55:6-8).

I/D 26

THE GENERALATE TEAM

December 1980

Called to a New Life

A Six-Year Program

During its plenary sessions in November, the Generalate Team reflected on the main points of the General Chapter. In this first of a new series of I/Ds, we offer a few aspects of our reflection. The field is too large to be covered all at once. We wish here to call attention to a few general points, a few calls from the Chapter and conversions that it asks of us as a program for the next six years. We will take up the main points more in detail in subsequent issues. We hope in this way to be of some help to you in your reflection on the 1980 Chapter,

We hope in this way to be of some help to you in your reflection on the 1980 Chapter, but we are sure that you yourselves will find many other aspects worth studying and meditating upon.

We are now at the final stage of the General Chapter: the follow-up. It is always a decisive stage, the time when the grain becomes wheat, when the word takes flesh. It is up to each of us now to renew the covenant that the Lord on his side once more renews with the Congregation. It is a moment of grace that demands prayer and reflection. To make it bear fruit will require as much time and effort as went into the preparation of the Chapter. The Chapter documents that you have just received

are not merely a record of the Chapter, or even a collection of conclusions that the capitulants agreed upon. They are the result of an experience of faith through which the Holy Spirit wishes to speak to the Congregation and renew with each of you the covenant that will allow Him to open up for our Congregation new paths for the "progress of the Word". They are our program of life for the next six years. We must put into it all our resources of mind and heart. We must 'pray' these documents and listen to them.

Renewing our vision

"... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you" (Eph. 1:18).

"I am grateful for the exceptional grace of the Chapter, which has made me realize that I belong to a group that is alive and capable of renewing itself, a group in which mutual relations are truly fraternal."

These remarks of a capitulant, in his final evaluation of the Chapter, bring us to the heart of its message. What had the greatest effect on the capitulants was not what was written but what was lived. The Chapter was above all a lived experience. We shared, of course, our worries, hopes, projects and dreams. But what we lived was above all our 'Spiritanness' – that dimension of our lives (difficult to put into words) in which each one finds his identity, in faith. Beyond differences in points of view, types of work and actual situations, each one finds his

deeper self in a community born not of flesh or of blood, but of God. It is not surprising that the celebrations that the capitulants found most moving were those of our unity, at the moment of the Superior General's re-election, and of fidelity to our original inspiration, in the pilgrimages to Saverne and to the tomb of the Venerable Father. The sharing of "the hope that is within us", of our family life, of the wonders that God works through our brothers, were at the heart of the Chapter. The texts give some indication of this. When Paul visited his communities and shared their experiences in the faith, he always looked back at them with a fresh vision and feelings of wonder, which he expressed in his letters, along with gratitude for the graces that God had given them.

This fresh vision, springing from our vocation and the grace that is within us, is the first call that the Chapter makes. It asks us to have trust in our Spiritan vocation and in the fundamental values of our apostolic consecration, to have the courage to look with the eyes of our Founders on our Mission, our lifestyle, our community life, our commitments and projects. Every Chapter should be a renewal – a return to a state of newness.

But our gaze should not be turned in on ourselves. We are witnesses and bearers of new life and of a new meaning to life. Our fresh look at our vocation should bring us to love the world in which we live and to make new contact with it — a world that is both distressing and fascinating, in which the Congregation must seek its agenda for the future. The life, the aspirations, the sufferings and needs of the world are decisive elements in our vocation today.

Realism and hope

"I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind...

Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men see visions" (Joel 3:1).

A Chapter is a time of synthesis, and of deciding on the relative merits of various demands and values. The Chapter had to bring about some sort of synthesis between realism and hope, and its program for the next six years is based on this.

It looked first of all at the FACTS. There would be no point in making plans for a Congregation that existed only in one's mind. In the section on Mission, the Chapter document (*Spiritan Life*) lists signs of suffering, of questioning on Mission today (SL, 29-31), the decline of Spiritan vocations in the Northern Hemisphere (SL, 32), and the aging of the Congregation (SL, 33). It also admits to injustices and the infringement of human rights in our Spiritan community (SL, 80).

But at the same time it points out signs of HOPE and of new life, such as rejuvenation through the Foundations (SL, 35), the acceptance of new situations by confreres (SL, 36), the desire for unity

(SL, 44), initiatives in the field of Justice and Peace (SL, 78), efforts to renew community life (SL, 90), and solidarity with confreres who are ill, retired or in difficulty.

The important thing is to look clearly at both our actual situation and "the hope that is within us". Only then can the Chapter talk about planning and projects for the future (SL, 234-235), especially as regards missionary priorities to retain and a formation program to reactivate. While respecting differences of culture and situation, it stresses the new unity (SL, 227), and looks towards the future (SL, 4), in order to give new impulse to Mission, formation, government, and the Spiritan policy on Justice and Peace. It listens to the voice of the young Churches and to the calls of tomorrow's Mission. The 1980 Chapter was the Chapter of the new Foundations, of the first Assistant from Africa, of 'Justice and Peace'.

Working together

Towards a new coresponsibility

The 1968-69 Chapter opened up the ways of subsidiarity. The 1974 Chapter stressed what was common in the midst of our diversity; it was the Chapter of solidarity. Here too, between subsidiarity and solidarity, the 1980 Chapter sought a synthesis, which may be called CORESPONSIBILITY: all responsible together for moving the Congregation forward towards the life that we wish to lead, the conversions to be undertaken, the program to be put into action, the new hope to be awakened.

Coresponsibility in animation. The renewal of the Congregation requires a sharing of effort and of gifts at all levels. Animation, especially in the fields of Justice and Peace (SL, 82), community life (SL, 95), Brothers (SL, 97-99), is not the domain of the General Council only, but also of the local and Major Superiors, in close collaboration with the General Council.

Coresponsibility in formation. In formation too there must be coresponsibility between all those in charge of it, working together (SL, 183-184), planning together (SL, 195) and sharing their expertise (SL, 194).

Coresponsibility in dialogue. The Chapter encourages all regions to follow the example already given by some, in bringing together Major Superiors to share their experiences and give mutual help in community animation, vocation work, education, ongoing formation and commitments for justice (SL, 217).

Coresponsibility in decision-making. The recognition of the Enlarged General Council as a privileged place for coresponsibility marked an important stage in the uniting and revitalization of the Congregation. It is here that the main decisions should be taken, with the participation of all in both coming to them and implementing them.

At the same time, the Chapter reminds us that coresponsibility needs coordination, and it points out the role of the General Council in coordinating and being ultimately responsible for the Congrega-

tion's program on formation (SL, 183), Justice and Peace (SL, 83), community (SL, 95), Brothers (SL, 97), Foundations (SL, 135), planning, distribution of personnel and new commitments (SL, 228).

From 'aggiornamento' to conversion: the main lines of a program.

"Seek the Lord while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near" (Is. 55:6).

The 1980 Chapter was the last before the promulgation of new Constitutions. We have been trying since the Council to bring about our 'aggiornamento' — an updating that was necessary and and that must continue. We cannot turn back, but the promulgation of new Constitutions implies that a certain stability has been found. During the coming years we must make the 'aggiornamento' produce real conversion. This call is to be found throughout the Chapter documents, and the main lines of its program all entail conversion.

1 - Getting back to the essentials of the Gospel.

Getting back to essentials is certainly the first main point in the program. We have already mentioned the synthesis between realism and hope, and that between subsidiarity and solidarity. But the most obvious synthesis is that which brings everything together in Christ. All the documents are centred on Him, everything radiates from Him. He is the focal point and inspiration of Mission, Justice and Peace, community life, formation, etc. We are continually reminded that our vocation is a mystery rather than a profession, that we belong to Christ rather than to ourselves.

MISSION is seen first of all as an adventure of faith (SL, 48). It is:

- a sharing in the Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection (SL, 49);
- a new incarnation of the Word of God (SL, 50);
 a discovery of the riches given to different peoples by God's Spirit (SL, 51);
- a work of reconciliation, in Christ (SL, 52);
- a work for true liberation, in Christ (SL, 53).

Our work for JUSTICE and PEACE is likewise inspired "by that charity of Christ which is poured into our hearts by his Spirit, who is given to us. That same Spirit it is who enables us to recognize God as our Father" (SL, 76). "We become more fully aware that true liberation requires the proclamation and presence of Jesus Christ, who radically changes hearts, reconciling men to God and to one another" (SL, 54).

The essentials bring us back also to COMMUNITY LIFE (SL, 93-95). The Chapter texts return to Libermann's insistence on community life (SL, C5) as a

means of apostolic life, which he saw as "that life of love and holiness which the Son of God lived on earth to save and sanctify souls" (SL, 2).

FORMATION too is centred on Christ, who is both the one who forms and the goal of formation. Formation is seen as a following of Christ, in faith (SL, 153, 156, 159, 181 etc.). The vocation and program of each Spiritan finds its source and its ideal in Christ.

2 - Universality.

"Reflection on recent mission experiences prompts us to go beyond a territorial concept of Mission to one which recognizes the call of all mission situations where the Gospel needs to be proclaimed" (SL, 56).

We are called to be missionaries in a new era – an era of universality and contact between cultures, of change and 'future shock'. Phrases such as "a new age of Mission" keep coming back in the Chapter texts.

The Chapter reminds us that "changes affecting our missionary life are not passing, superficial phenomena; they reflect the changes in the world and the deepening renewal in the Church. We cannot turn back" (SL, 19). Our future depends on our ability to adapt to new situations. It is not only the fields of evangelization that change but also the methods and partners. The appearance of new centres of vitality in the Church, especially in the Southern Hemisphere, the contribution of the young Churches with their "riches and treasures", the new missionsending areas, the intercultural exchange - all of this will call for a change in mentality, new ways of looking at Mission, and a new lifestyle (cf. I/D No. 25). In this context one can see the importance of the Foundations. The growth of the Congregation in different nations and cultures opens the way to new expressions of the Spiritan charism and a rejuvenation in membership, outlook and culture (SL, 123).

Taking account of the demands of Mission today, of new challenges and of changes to be made, will we have the courage to make the necessary 'migrations' and take up new commitments, where we are or elsewhere? To grow old in out-of-date commitments is worse than growing old in personnel. One of the most important tasks in the next six years will be to lay the foundations for the future that the Chapter desired for the Congregation

3 - Justice and Peace.

"The Chapter gives a clear mandate to the incoming Generalate Team to make animation in the area of Justice and Peace a primary focus of its ministry" (SL, 83).

"Man is the first road that the Church must take in its Mission" (Pope John Paul II). The Chapter documents invite us, in a more pressing way than usual, to a new solidarity with human situations, and new forms of presence and of dialogue with the world. We shall move securely towards the future if, in the present phase of evaluation, reorientation and new choices, we have the courage to turn frankly towards the poor. In a world in which the "cry of the poor" becomes louder, from the depths of injustice, oppression and exploitation, the Chapter invites us to a new start. In Franciscan terms one would speak of a "return to Assisi".

The commitment to Justice and Peace was one of the great intuitions of the Chapter. Never in previous Chapters had the call been made so clearly. It is one of the key orientations of the 1980 Chapter and should be one of the great sources of inspiration for renewal. It should put us in a state of "ongoing conversion" (SL, 79) and lead us to review our attitudes, choices, availability and lifestyle. The Chapter goes so far as to ask us to be ready to risk our life at the side of the poor.

4 - Our religious-missionary life.

"... that one of the primary objectives of animation over the next six years be the nature of membership, i.e. that we are, before all else, a religious-missionary Congregation in which all members live as brothers" (SL, 97).

The religious life is the clearest sign of our dedication to the service of Mission and of the poor. Christ's mission was first of all to share his vocation with the Apostles, to motivate them to live with Him the adventure of being Son and witness of the Father. In Him the Father's love appeared. All his teaching tended towards the deepening of this vocation, to place it at the heart of their being, their concern and their program of life.

The equality and fraternity of all Spiritans is rooted in this spiritual experience. The Lord has called us first of all to live together the total donation of ourselves to the Father. The diversity of commitments within our single family and single vocation becomes secondary. The Chapter asks us to stress the deeper aspect of our lives which unites us before any distinctions are made. It asks us to take practical steps to promote equality and to enhance the role of Brothers. The role of the laity will be more and more decisive in tomorrow's Mission. Areas such as Justice and Peace, labour relations, the mass media, Marxism etc. require an active, militant evangelical presence that can only be supplied by lay persons. Why then are lay vocations to the Congregation dying out? Why are potential Spiritan Brothers seeking other forms of consecrated life? The Chapter

did not give enough reflection to this problem, but the basic principle was laid down. Will we have the courage to draw all the consequences from it? Are we ready to open ourselves to the demands of today's Mission and overcome the situation in our Congregation, where young Brothers have difficulty in finding their identity?

5 - Community Life.

"Community renewal is a priority for the Congregation during the next six years, and we ask the Generalate Team, Major Superiors and local Superiors to direct their animation to this purpose" (SL, 95).

Community life should be a source of inspiration and revitalization for apostolic life. The Chapter calls attention to the need for a living and praying community, and asks for further research in this area. By renewing our community life we increase our credibility as a force for the future. To give new heart to our communities, we should use all the means at our disposal: ongoing formation, refresher courses, training of animators, rotation of personnel. Our solidarity with others should be rooted in solidarity with our own community: the Holy Spirit calls us back always to this.

6 - Forward-looking courage.

Formation is presented as a focus and inspiration for the whole Congregation. Rather than mere instructions on Spiritan formation, the document is a call for a renaissance, the dynamism of new beginnings. The whole Congregation should put itself in a state of formation. It is not just a question of shaking off the weight of years and being reconverted once and for all; in a quickly evolving world, readjustment is continually necessary if the witness of our lives is to have an impact on people in their actual circumstances. Our tired eyes no longer accommodate to the changing world, and young people quickly sense this. There are families that do not want children, said Fr. De Couesnongle, Superior General of the Dominicans, and there are communities that do not want young candidates for fear that they may have to change something in their lives. The young will not respond to our prophetic calls and commit themselves with us to Mission, unless they see that these calls come not from abstract ideas but from living communities. donation of their life must spring from a deep spiritual experience. The Chapter recalled some fundamental demands of tomorrow's Mission. discussing formation, it also sketched a portrait of the Spiritan for the 80's. All the main lines of the Chapter documents meet here, even in their hesitations. The young already have a foothold in the new era. The Congregation must count on them, on their dreams, their forward-looking courage and their ability to adapt to tomorrow's needs.

THE GENERALATE TEAM.

I/D 27

THE GENERALATE TEAM

March 1981

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice"

Spiritan Witness

This issue of I/D will be somewhat different from usual, in that it will consist mainly of concrete examples of efforts to promote justice. The world today is more sensitive to cases of injustice than in the past. Newspapers and reviews give considerable space to them, and the subject is treated in the Chapter documents of many Congregations.

We could have drawn up a catalogue of injustices round the world, picking out the more striking ones and recalling the Church's stand on many of these issues. But this would be repetitious, as we take it that confreres are already informed of them, and challenged by them,

through the press, radio and television.

We have decided instead to give a few examples of what Spiritans are actually doing in this area. We realize that there are many others that we could have quoted (some of which have already appeared in 'Spiritan News' or elsewhere), but space is limited and we have tried to pick examples from different continents and different types of engagement. In some cases we have not been able to give too much detail, out of respect for the delicate situation of the confreres concerned.

Extracts from Letters from Missionaries in Angola

"My confrere has come back from home leave. It was difficult for him to come back, as his aging father and his sister did all they could to prevent him. They refused even to say goodbye. It was hard on him ...".

"Say a special prayer for our men who are on the road each day, in constant danger. It is hard on the nerves... but 'caritas Christi urget nos'. Please, no publicity, but remember us in your prayers...".

"As one confrere put it: 'If we continue to risk our lives each day, it is not because we are braver or better than others, but because God keeps us in his hand'...".

"On all sides there was guerrilla warfare, political tensions, hardships. One may be tough, but one isn't made of steel... During my last home leave I wanted to stay at home. After all, we are made to live in peace and to seek peace, beauty and goodness. I was terribly afraid of coming back to Angola. Guerrilla activity was approaching relentlessly. But the Sisters were there; mission life continued; the people were in need; the Church had been only recently planted... I had no right to abandon it. This struggle spoilt my whole holiday. With feet of lead I went to the airport to return here. It was

as I had foreseen - even worse . . . Systematically, all the villages round about were attacked and burnt. Seventy per cent of the area near the mission was depopulated, leaving the mission village like an island, full of refugees. An attack could come any day . . . Two years ago the Sisters left, and I was on my own ... There was often an interior conflict, one voice saying to me, 'You are crazy to stay', and the other, 'You are brave'. The fact was that I simply could not abandon the mission and these people, as they were in such distress. Day and night they were with me. I tried to find food and drink and medicines for them. Could I leave, when they depended on me? And then there was the Church work. On Sundays the chapel was full. There were baptisms to be done, confessions to be heard... In the villages that were still left, activists intimidated the catechists, and only a few of these had the courage to continue. This made it even harder for me to leave . . . I was the only white man left in the area . . . Then the mission schools and institutions were nationalized, and two weeks later the mission house itself... Everything was taken except what I had in my bedroom ... It seemed it was time to leave, but to go where: back to my homeland or to some other village here where there was still a chapel and a mission house?... I am now in a hut without water, toilet or kitchen. I have a bed and a cupboard, and I'm continuing... People are coming again... There are more than a hundred children attending catechism... If I had some good catechists, I could take a few months off, but I am not sure that if I went home I would have the courage to come back... I could have spoken to you about religion, politics, Marxism, what it means to be human, about Christ becoming man for us, for you and me and broken people like us, about so many other things. I have meditated a lot in the past few years, not so much in church but late at night... Hope is a great virtue...".

"We must continue to row against the tide and try to hold on. I am convinced that sooner or later we shall have to speak out clearly and take a clear stand on behalf of the poor and oppressed. Perhaps by the time we make up our minds to do it it will be too late. We keep putting it off. Each time we find another fear, another reason for not speaking out clearly. And things become more and more difficult and complicated... What will the Congregation do after the Chapter, with its statement on Justice and Peace? What sort of statement will our own Chapter here make? There will certainly be discussion, there will be agreement that something should be done, and then the possible consequences of an energetic protest will inspire the usual fear... Will the Congregation have the courage to risk its personnel?... The Congregation should speak out clearly if it is to be truly missionary."

Chaplaincy for African Students in Paris

(From the French Province's bulletin 'Province et Mission', June 1977)

"... We are in regular contact, here in the community and in their homes and meeting places, with about a thousand African students (of the 15,000 in the Paris area and 30,000 in France). They have been plunged into a world completely different from their own and often hostile to them in their daily life. They are up against all sorts of problems and difficulties, simply from the fact that they are 'coloured' – difficulties in finding accommodation and work, difficulties with registration forms and bureaucracy... Many of them have to study by day and work by night, or vice versa.

In such a world of insecurity and injustice, one can easily understand how small a part faith plays

in the life of the average African student.

This cannot but concern us. We try to respond by being present among them, welcoming them, showing solidarity with them, and taking concrete action... It is important to help them stand up for their rights, and to denounce racism wherever we find it - in administrative services, landlords or employers . . . We affirm our solidarity with their aspirations for justice, equality and true respect for others and for their culture . . . Their complaints and criticisms on these points are only too justified, unfortunately, even at times in so far as our own communities are concerned. How many of our confreres on home leave in France, or African Bishops visiting here, have enquired about students that they know and about what we are doing, or not doing, for them. And many of these students will soon be leaders in their own African societies, and will determine, for better or worse, the future of the Church there and the direction that their societies

More than 85% of the students with whom we are in touch have drifted away from the Church as they knew it in Africa and as they see it in France. They have not forgiven the collusion of the Church

with Western colonialism in Africa, and they are quite indifferent to present Church structures in their countries. As for the Church structures and communities in France, they find nothing there but indifference to them, segregation, and conscious or unconscious paternalism . . . Naturally they reject this, and surely we can understand them. Some of the missionary propaganda in France is also offensive to them. A Senegalese student said to me: 'I went three times to church here, and nobody treated me like a person.'

The Church is ourselves, our communities, our missions. What are we doing to give it a better image? Those who challenge us and reject the counter-witness of the Church are often past leaders of Catholic Action or former seminarians. We cannot remain indifferent to their challenge... None of this is imagination, but the facts of everyday experience.

At the suggestion of a group of students, twice a term we hold a meeting comprising a discussion, bible readings and a Eucharistic service...

By way of conclusion, we would like to raise three serious questions:

- (1) To what extent do the missionary Congregations, including our own, measure up to their responsibilities towards immigrants in France?
- (2) Has the Congregation a clear program for the assistance of African students and workers in France?
- (3) It is an undeniable fact that the Church in Africa, our missionaries and our Bishops like those in France for that matter show a certain fear and mistrust of students, because they tend to call into question past and present structures and methods. Why should this be so? Why not go a bit deeper into the causes? Are we afraid that it would show up our failings?..."

Jean GUILLOUX, C.S.Sp.

The 'Jornal de Itamarati'

Itamaratí is a small village on the Jurua River, in Amazonia (Brazil). In the immense area that it serves, extending along 1,000 kms of the river, there is a population of about 10,000, mostly mestizos who live near the river and make their living from the rubber plantations.

Fr. Gulielmus BURMANJE, a Dutch Spiritan who was drowned in the Jurua River on 29 January, had

begun publication in June 1977 of a local monthly newspaper, the 'Jornal de Itamarati', aimed at pastoral care, the building up of a sense of community, and the conscientization of these isolated people, threatened by various kinds of disease and oppressed by the rubber industrialists.

To promote unity, the paper (10-12 polycopied pages, closely typed in two columns with illustrations

drawn by hand) gives local news such as births, deaths, illnesses and school items. It also discusses politics, replies to questions on health and hygiene, and explains local proverbs. In short, it treats of anything that is of interest to the daily life of its readers. It puts a lot of stress on popular religious practices, which are the subject of pastoral research in Latin America at present. To arrive at true evangelization and a solid grounding in the faith, it is necessary to bring out the valuable elements in popular religion, while eliminating the abuses that have crept in.

Another aim of the paper is to give a greater awareness of their possibilities to these people who have become passive as a result of centuries of oppression. A feeling of complete powerlessness has killed all initiative in them. The Gospel is presented to them as a liberating message, and also as a call for them to help themselves. In its first issue, the paper quoted the Bishops of Amazonia, who were concerned about the situation of the Indians and injustices in the confiscation of land. In the face of such injustice the paper does not hesitate to go into specifics, giving simple and clear questions and replies:

"If someone buys land, has he a right to expel the peasants who are living on it?" Reply: "Never".
"Has the Brazilian peasant a right to a plot of land of his own in this immense country?" Reply: "The Constitution guarantees him such a right."

- "If the Mayor, the Chief of Police or the Judge supports an unjust proprietor, should one obey him?" Reply: "No. One should appeal to the INCRA (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform)."

- "What should one do to guarantee one's right to a piece of land?" Reply: "The best guarantee is to remain in occupation of the land, even if compensation is offered for vacating it."

The 'Jornal de Itamarati' leaves no doubt, therefore, about the Church's position. It tries to make the people realize that they have rights and that they must defend them. It also tries to make the authorities realize that exploitation and oppression are incompatible with Christian conscience.

The paper is modest in circulation but courageous and effective. The 41st issue, of January 1981 (signed by Fr. BURMANJE shortly before his tragic death), mentions its circulation: 71 copies!

Demonstration for the Rights of Immigrants

During the meeting of the Enlarged Provincial Council of France in 1979, the French Senate was due to debate, on 26 June, a Government bill which would seriously undermine the rights of immigrant workers. The Provincial Council decided to suspend its session on the afternoon of 25 June to allow its participants to join in a silent protest march through Paris, organized by the *Interdiocesan Service*

for Immigrant Workers and the Movement against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples, and supported by about 30 other organizations, mainly of Christian inspiration.

Many of the 36 participants in the Council meeting did in fact take part in the march, and on the following day the Senate voted against the bill.

Haitian Refugees

The Brooklyn community (New York) comprises three Spiritans (a Haitian and two French confreres who had worked in Haiti) and a Haitian secular priest. Since 1971 they have been working for the Haitian refugees in New York, who number about 40,000 at present.

A house, like the others in the neighbourhood, was acquired and is used as a place of welcome and an administrative centre. It is open day and night for all to come to with their troubles (finding accommodation on arrival, registration papers, legal problems, the learning of English, financial difficulties etc.). The lower floor of the house has been furnished as a 'foyer', with help from the four Spiritan Provinces of the United States and Canada, and these, apart from financial help, lend the weight of their influence in dealing with authorities.

Swamped as it is by such a tide of human misery,

the small group is constantly under pressure and can do with any support they get.

As part of their pastoral work they translate liturgical texts and hymns into Creole, to help the people maintain their culture and express themselves through it (in spite of complaints by other Church workers who would prefer to see them fully integrated into American ways). Texts and music produced in New York are even at times asked for back in Haiti.

There is obviously a political side to some of the activities. It could hardly be otherwise when trying to help people who are rejected both at home and in their new place of refuge. Conflict with civil authorities is inevitable, and even with priests who see things from a different angle and would prefer a 'purer' ministry, with no ambiguities. The same is true of relations with the Government of Haiti, for the defence of refugees who seek political asylum is in itself a political statement.

Open Letter to the Prime Minister of the Bahamas

January 14, 1981

"Dear Prime Minister Pindling,

We are the major superiors of the Holy Ghost Congregation in North America and the Caribbean assembled in Puerto Rico for our annual meeting In the course of our deliberations we have been considering the situation of Haitian refugees in various areas where we work. They are of concern to us since the Holy Ghost Congregation has ministered to the Haitian people since the mid-nineteenth century.

and we have several Haitian confreres who give

dedicated service to their people.

We have learned during these days that your government has set January 18, 1981, as the date after which all Haitians in the Bahamas are subject

to immediate expulsion.

Your government has already acquired an international reputation for justice and respect for all sectors of your society, as well as for maintaining good relations with other countries. Certainly, too, as a young nation, you have incurred many problems from the influx of the Haitians; you face in particular a problem with unemployment and this has been aggravated by such a large and unplanned increase in the number of inhabitants.

We know, therefore, that you have not taken this decision lightly and yet we think that a more human solution could be found. We, like many others, were shocked by the events of Cayo Lobos, and recent acts of the Haitian government indicate that any refugees forced to return to Haiti face a very uncertain

future.

Several of us know from personal experience that the Bahamians are a deeply religious people and that many, including yourself, are committed Christians. It is, therefore, in the name of God, of our common Christian traditions of compassion for those in need and of respect for the dignity of all human beings that we now appeal to you to rescind or at least to postpone this order. Such a postponement would give international agencies time to arrange for other nations to help in receiving these unfortunate people.

We make this appeal to you with no ulterior motive, but entirely out of concern for fellow-human beings in distress, with whom we have a special

affinity.

Yours sincerely,

Maurice BARBOTIN, C.S.Sp. (Sup., Guadeloupe)
Charles CONNORS, C.S.Sp. (Sup., Puerto Rico)
Silvio D'OSTILIO, C.S.Sp. (Prov., USA West)
Jean-Guy GAGNON, C.S.Sp. (Prov., Canada)
William HEADLEY, C.S.Sp. (Prov., USA East)
Georges BOUVIER, C.S.Sp. (French Guiana)
Michel DE VERTEUIL, C.S.Sp. (French Guiana)
Michael DOYLE, C.S.Sp. (Prov., Trinidad)
Michael DOYLE, C.S.Sp. (Prov., Trans-Canada)
Gaston GAUTHIER, C.S.Sp. (Sup., Martinique)
Antoine ADRIEN, C.S.Sp. (New York)
Antoine MERCIER, C.S.Sp. (Montreal)
Michael SCOTT, C.S.Sp. (Toronto)
Enda WATTERS, C.S.Sp. (Frov., Ireland)
Norman BEVAN, C.S.Sp. (Gen. Assistant, Rome)
Christopher PROMIS, C.S.Sp. (Gen. Assistant, Rome)."

And what of ourselves?

The above examples (chosen, as we said, from among many) have not been given in a spirit of self-satisfaction.

There are indeed instances of heroic commitment on the part of confreres, as well as the taking of a stand by one or other group or assembly. But real commitment is a duty for each Spiritan, and not merely for a privileged elite. It would be too easy for us to soothe our consciences with the thought that some Spiritans are living in dangerous situations.

We cannot, of course, all undertake the same work, nor does Spiritan unity require this. But we can allow ourselves to be challenged by those in the front line. Otherwise we may become lethargic and stifle the anguish that gripped the heart of a Poullart des Places or a Libermann. Perhaps we have too often heard warnings about what we should not do rather than encouragement to do the things we should.

- We cannot remain indifferent to situations of crying injustice. Our confreres who are engaged in trying to put them right should be recognized and encouraged. They are not marginalized Spiritans with a special vocation. We must support them and this may bring us further than we think.
- We must combat human misery in all its forms: sociological, political, economic, cultural and also spiritual. Is atheism not a very real form of poverty? Sin both individual and social is at the heart of the structures that refuse 20 million people the right to a fatherland, that condemn 200 million people to hunger and war. If we remain silent and do nothing, do we not become accomplices? We should

not only open our eyes, but raise our voice and make ourselves heard.

• We are not alone in this enterprise. The Chapter texts of other institutes also stress Justice and Peace, in a language not heard till recently. One Congregation has said that its animation for a whole year will bear only on this subject; another that absolute priority will be given to the poor in every situation. We must join forces with others working for the same goals.

We must accept the challenge to go beyond ourselves: beyond our fixed habits, our human prudence, our settled individualism.

Is **our lifestyle** — at the Generalate as in the furthest mission station — an expression of the Gospel in the eyes of the oppressed? We are not poor merely by saying that we are. We are not poor once and for all.

Is our spiritual life in line with that of our Founders? Is Libermann's love for the liberated slaves reflected in a like love on our part for the oppressed of today: exploited workers, stateless persons, immigrants, the unemployed, the hungry?

The Generalate Team has no intention of trying to lay down norms on Justice and Peace for each Spiritan. Situations differ. But let us challenge each other. It is up to each circumscription to formulate its policy in the light of local conditions. It is up to each Spiritan to stir up his Province, his District, his community, in this area. He will do so to the extent that he personally "hungers and thirsts after justice".

THE GENERALATE TEAM.

To all Spiritans from the Committee for the new Constitutions in collaboration with the Generalate Team

Const. 1 - May 1981

PREPARATION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTIONS

Congregazione dello Spirito Santo - 195, Clivo di Cinna - 00136 Roma

SPIRITAN, WHAT DO YOU-SAY OF YOURSELF?

My dear confreres,

Here is the first stage in a long task that we must undertake together: the revising of our Constitutions, as other Congregations are also doing or have already done. The Church asks it of us, and many of you have also expressed a strong desire for it. The last General Chapter entrusted its realization to the General Council.

Do not be put off by the length of this document. Do not put it aside, but begin reading it straight away - it is important. You will see in it the reasons for the task, what it entails, and the different stages to be gone through. You will find specific questions on which you are asked to reflect and give your opinion. I hope that each of you will feel directly concerned and will make his contribution. We must try to express, to ourselves and to the Church, the ideal that binds us together. Our Founders proposed it to us, and generations of Spiritans have lived it according to the demands of their time. It is up to us now to formulate it in today's terms.

It is not a question of trying to codify the source of our life and dynamism. What we wish to do is to write a succinct, concrete, simple Rule of Life which will help us to listen to the Spirit and be moved by that dynamism, in fidelity to our common calling. We begin this work now, and hope that all will take part in it.

I realize that it will require time and energy on your part. It will mean meetings and long periods of reflection, individually and in groups. I know that you have little time and that your energies are taken up by your ministry and apostolate. I would like to convince you that this work that we are asking of you is not something marginal to your own work but concerns it directly. Our membership in the Congregation and our fidelity to its spirit are closely connected with our service to the Church, which we accomplish in community and in the name of the community.

Poullart des Places and, later, Libermann, gave us a Rule of Life, which has been modified and adapted in the course of our history. In view of the changes that have taken place in the world, the Church suggested an experimental period, which has come to an end, and she asks us now to revise our Constitutions in the light of this research and to say something clearer on ourselves. Spiritan, what do you say of yourself? How will you express to yourself, to the Church and to other communities, what is your vocation, where you seek your inspiration, how you intend to live the Gospel, to what you commit yourself in the Church and in your Congregation? The Church asks us to do this for she wants to see how we see ourselves. She wants to welcome and support our common vocation within the wider community of the faithful.

I invite you, then, to an act of faith and of obedience: An act of faith, first of all, in the importance of Constitutions for our life and apostolate. In doing this, I am aware of speaking to you as the distant successor of our Founders and in fidelity to their spirit. An act of obedience too, in accepting the Church's judgement that the time has come for a more stable Rule of Life, even if this view is not shared by all. Together we will draw up this Rule of Life, which, as I said, should be simple, concrete and clear - a source of inspiration rather than a body of law, a plan of life rather than a code.

We must begin straight away, as it is a difficult task and will take time. In reading this document you will see for yourselves that we shall need every bit of the five years that we have for it. I appeal to you, therefore, for your cooperation, and I feel sure of it for, thank God, solidarity is one of our strong points.

In speaking of solidarity, I would like to thank sincerely the many confreres who have shown it in connection with the recent bereavements at the Generalate. Many thanks indeed for your sympathy and support.

Thanks too to the Committee that has drawn up the present outline of our common project. Let us do our best together, and may the Holy Spirit inspire us!

Hibeheaste ... Frans TIMMERMANS Superior General C.S.Sp.

Preliminaries

0.1 A decision of the 1980 General Chapter:

"The General Chapter directs the Superior General and the General Council to take all necessary means to ensure that a draft of the Constitutions will be ready for consideration by the General Chapter of 1986, which will determine the final text and approve it before submission to the proper ecclesiastical authority" (SL, 236).

0.2 At the Church's request

In its Apostolic Constitution *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Second Vatican Council explicitly asked for such updating:

"The Council's intention here is to deal with the life and discipline of those religious institutes whose members make profession of chastity, poverty and obedience, and to provide for their present-day requirements" (Perf. Car., 1).

"Therefore, constitutions, directories, customaries, books of prayers and ceremonies and other similar volumes must be revised accordingly and brought into line with the documents of this sacred Council, by the suppression of anything obsolete" (Perf. Car., 3).

"The missionary spirit must be preserved in religious institutes and, according to the character of particular institutes, must be adapted to modern conditions, so that the Gospel may be preached more effectively to all peoples" (Perf. Car., 20).

0.3 Some directives

"This renewal must be brought about under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church" (Perf. Car., 2).

"No effective renewal or valid adaptation to modern times will be possible without the cooperation of all members of religious institutes" (Perf. Car., 4).

In the section of *Ecclesiae Sanctae* dealing with the application of *Perfectae Caritatis*, Pope Paul VI distinguished between

- a FUNDAMENTAL CODE containing only what is stable and permanent: Constitutions in the strict sense (12-13), and
- ANOTHER DOCUMENT containing elements "that are liable to change as customs change with time, or that correspond to merely local situations" (14).

Congregations were given a period of 8-12 years to bring about this updating. The experimental period, reflected in our recent Chapter, is now over, and we are asked to evaluate it and to draw up new Constitutions, distinguishing what is permanent from what is transitory. Many Congregations have already completed their Constitutions, while others. like ourselves, are still in the process of rewriting them.

Approval, finally, by the Church means recognition that the Institute, through its Constitutions, contributes to the building up of the Body of Christ.

0.4 Getting underway

On 12 Nov. 1980, the General Council decided to set up a committee to undertake the initial work for the revision of the Constitutions, and the members of the committee were named on 24 Jan. 1981: Fr. Georges-Henri THIBAULT (France, chairman), Anthony GEOGHEGAN (Ireland), Joaquim Ramos SEIXAS (Spain) and Antoine MERCIER (Canada). Their first meeting was fixed for 6-11 April 1981, in Rome.

The General Council hopes that everyone will participate fully in the preparation of the new Constitutions – a preparation that should become, for each Spiritan and for the communities, an important object of prayer and reflection for the next few years.

0.5 Committee meeting (6-11 April 1981)

The Committee set about its work by getting information from experts and from Congregations that have already revised their Constitutions, consulting the documents on the revision of Constitutions, and going through, as a starting point, our old Constitutions, along with the texts of the last three General Chapters (CDD, GA and SL). A useful reference work was that of Fr. Michel DORTEL-CLAUDOT, S.J.: Que mettre dans les nouvelles Constitutions, règles de vie ou normes des congrégations religieuses?

As a result of their meeting, the Committee drew up a plan, a questionnaire, some texts and a time-schedule (cf. no. 7 below).

.6 Plan and questionnaire

The plan that was drawn up is merely a provisional working tool, bringing together and arranging in some sort of order the subjects to be treated in the two documents (cf. no. 3 above), without distinguishing these for the moment.

As the subjects to be treated come largely from Spiritan sources, an effort has been made to indicate the main references. It has not seemed worthwhile, at this early stage, to distinguish "what is stable and permanent" from what is subject to change.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to stimulate reflection on points on which it would be particularly useful to have the opinions of the confreres.

0.7 The four stages

- A Distribution to ALL CONFRERES of the present document (containing the plan and questionnaire), with an introductory letter from the Superior General.
 - Return of the replies to the Generalate by 31 Jan. 1982.
 - Work on these replies at the Generalate during the month of February 1982.
 - Meeting of the Committee (1-13 March 1982) to prepare a report, based on the replies, for the 1982 Enlarged General Council.
 - Report to the 1902 Enlarged General Council.

- B Appointment of a Committee for the writing of a FIRST DRAFT of the Constitutions.
 - Distribution to ALL CONFRERES, between 1982 and 1984, of the first draft, for their comments.
 - Report to the 1984 Enlarged General Council.
- C Between 1984 and 1986, the writing of a SECOND DRAFT, taking into account remarks and suggestions made by confreres on the first draft.
 - Distribution of the second draft to ALL CAPITULANTS for the 1986 General Chapter. They will be asked to collect the opinions of the confreres.
 - Amendments and approval of the Constitutions by the 1986 General Chapter.
- D Approval by the Holy See.

0.8 Participation of all Spiritans

The participation of all in the drawing up of the Constitutions is essential: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). It is the contribution of each confrere and of each community that will clarify "our apostolic life" and how we wish to live it.

Two years ago you already made an important contribution in replying to the pre-capitular document *Our Spiritan Life* for the 1980 General Chapter. Those replies will be taken into consideration in drawing up the first draft. It is not, therefore, necessary to reply again to identical questions – a simple reference from you would suffice.

It would perhaps be better for you to make a choice among the questions below, according to your fields of special interest or competence, and to treat these more explicitly, while replying only briefly to the other questions.

Experts in different fields (Scripture, theology, Spiritan spirituality and other areas) and those who are experimenting in new types of apostolate will certainly have a particular contribution to make.

0.9 The Committee proposes that all confreres meditate on this text from Libermann:

"As members of a Society you have a purpose, and this purpose can be fulfilled only with the cooperation of all. This necessary unity can be brought about only by a Rule and its observance.

"As God has called us in a Congregation, He wants us to work out our salvation through the means He has established there, namely the Rule. Our Rule is nothing else than the evangelical counsels applied to our vocation, our state in life, and in it, therefore, we find the practice of perfection.

"If there is no Rule, there is disorder; if the Rule is not observed, there is no unity; if it is badly observed, the missionaries will not be fervent. Without order, unity and fervour, what good can we do compared with what we could achieve when filled with the same spirit, governed by a single will, moving in a single direction and fired with holy enthusiasm?"

('Règle Provisoire' of Libermann's Missionaries, Text and Commentary 'pro manuscripto', Gloss, p. 1.)

Part I: THE CONGREGATION AND ITS FOUNDERS

The aim of this first part is to help reflection on the essential elements that characterize the Congregation from its sources – its Founders and its traditions as lived down to the present time. There must be an effort to identify what is commonly referred to as the CHARISM OF A CONGREGATION.

Founders and Tradition

"They must acknowledge and preserve the spirit and intentions of their founders, together with those sound traditions which form the heritage of each Institute" (Perf. Car., 2b).

Our recent Chapters have stressed how important it is to know our Founders, our history and our spiritual heritage, and to draw inspiration from them and reinterpret them for today (cf., e.g., GA, 48-49). The revision of the Constitutions will give us an opportunity to deepen and clarify our knowledge. You will do a great service to the revising Committee and to the Congregation by pointing out what seems essential to you in our Founders and traditions, as well as the texts, articles and Chapter documents that best express these ideas. The following remarks are merely to stimulate reflection.

1 Claude Poullart des Places

"... evangelize the poor... be completely available... humble and difficult work" (cf. Latin Rule, 3). A good number of Spiritans feel that we do not give enough importance to Poullart des Places.

2 Libermann

"... the poorest and most abandoned" (Règle Prov., 1, quoted in CDD, 1). "... the poor, the weak, the unfortunate... those who are furthest from salvation and whose needs are greatest" (quoted in CDD, 5). "They shall be the advocates, supporters and defenders of the weak and lowly against all who oppress them" (N.D. II, 256, quoted in SL. 77).

Because of the diversity of those whom Libermann refers to as "the poor", some clarification of his thought on this point would be welcome.

Libermann often stresses "community life", "religious life" (cf. quotations in SL, 85). In view of the difficulty the Congregation has in harmonizing life and action, nature and end, it would be useful, here too, to bring out more clearly the thought of Libermann in this area (cf. quotation on "apostolic life", Règlements 1849, in SL, 68).

.3 Tradition

Our tradition, as actually lived in the footsteps of the Founders, can be summed up in three main points: consecration to God – for the apostolate to the poor – in community life.

These essential elements, lived by Spiritans through the years, have been stressed by the different Chapters, especially in texts dealing with the *Nature and End of the Congregation* and *Community Life*.

There is general agreement on these points, but, in reinterpreting the Spiritan charism for different periods, the Chapters have sometimes insisted on one element rather than another, with the risk of causing a dichotomy. There must be an attempt to define the Congregation in a way that will bring out both its inner nature and its end, and the link between its religious and missionary life. It should be noted that the expression religious-missionary and the international character of the Congregation have taken on greater importance in the last few years.

Likewise, concerning the end of the Congregation, the evolution of Mission has led different Chapters to formulate it in different ways. The traditional view of mission has found itself faced with concepts such as openness to *universal mission*, *missionary situations* rather than mission fields, and the greater stress on *justice and peace*. We have not yet been able to define precisely who are "the poor" for us today. We may remember how upset a large number of Spiritans were when the "specific end" of the Congregation was defined almost exclusively in terms of "first evangelization". It is important to define the aim of the Congregation in today's terms, while maintaining a close link with our Founders and tradition.

To help reflection, here are a few references:

- On the NATURE AND END OF THE CONGREGATION: Latin Rule, 3-5; Const., 5-7; CDD, 1-32 (especially 1 and 20-22); GA, 1-5, 24-26; SL, 56, 59, 61.
- On RELIGIOUS-MISSIONARY: cf., in SL, the numerous references under this heading in the index.
- On the POOR: CDD, 4; GA, 46-47; SL, 4, 59, 60, 75, 78-80, 143, 146, 152, 168, and the whole section on Justice and Peace.

1.4 "Spiritual heritage". Spiritan spirituality

The Chapters have insisted especially on Libermann's writings.

CDD, 337, lists some characteristics of Libermann's spirituality: his "sensitivity to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, his special attraction for the most abandoned, his simplicity and peace of soul, his prayer of practical union with God, his acceptance of his own weakness and his devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary". These seem indeed to be key elements in our "spiritual heritage".

Other Spiritan sources should also be explored: Claude Poullart des Places, Blessed Jacques Laval and other less known Spiritan 'saints'.

SL (181), for its part, enumerates some elements in our "common spirit".

In this spiritual heritage, the Holy Spirit and Our Lady hold a special place: "The Congregation consecrates its members in a special way to the Holy Spirit, who is the source of all holiness and of apostolic zeal, and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary" (Règlements, 1849).

N.B.: Here and later in this document, we have limited ourselves to 'Spiritan' sources, but the Committee is also looking into other sources, such as Scripture, Church documents, etc.

Questions

1. How would you express, in a few lines, the essential elements to be brought out in a description of the Congregation and its charism today, in fidelity to the Founders and to Spiritan tradition?

2. The poor, the most abandoned, difficult ministries, first evangelization, missionary situations, Justice and Peace ... these are several approaches in determining our apostolic orientation.

a) How would you express the Congregation's essential aims and end?

b) What criteria would you give for judging fidelity to the Congregation's charism?
c) Who are the "poor and abandoned" for us today?
3. The recent Chapters have used the expression "religious-missionary" to describe Spiritans. Do you think this is an apt formula? Why, or why not?

4. What, for you, are the key elements in our "spiritual heritage"? How would you describe "Spiritan spirituality"?

There is not a uniform name for the Congregation. In CDD, 1, it is called "the Congregation of the Holy Ghost under the patronage of the Immaculate Heart of Mary". Should we try to have greater uniformity, and, if so, under what name? Would you agree to a more general use of the name 'Spiritan'? If not, what would you suggest?

Part II: SPIRITAN LIFE

In this Second Part we would like to develop the essential points already mentioned in Part 1: A) Consecration to God, B) for the apostolate to the poor, C) in community life.

The various Chapters, responding to the needs of their times, have handed down valuable reflections to us on these subjects. What we would ask you now is to try to pick out the more important elements, to point out what you would consider the more important developments, and to answer the questions below, with a view to the needs of our own time and in accordance with your own particular charism or interest.

Our Founders also have something to say:

"Three things make up the spiritual basis of the Congregation: community life, the apostolate, and the religious spirit which should be the soul of both community life and apostolate" (Règle Prov., Part II, Chap. 1, 1).

"Apostolate is the aim of our Congregation; community life is the means by which we try to achieve this aim; and the religious spirit is the principle that should animate both of these" (Ibid.).

"It would be good to point out to the confreres . . . that mission is the aim, but that religious life is a means 'sine qua non- and that this means should receive their full accention and care" (N.D. XIII, 354-355).

2.0

2.1

A) CONSECRATION

(Cf. Const., 239-274; CDD, 18-35, 61-125; GA, 40-47.)

When one reads the Chapter texts, one sees:

- a desire to establish a clear link between consecration and apostolate;
- a search for the apostolic dimension of consecrated life; and
- increased stress, in the last few years, on a deepening of religious life.

These concerns should also be ours in the revision of the Constitutions.

- Consecrated to God in and through the apostolate (cf. CDD, 13-14, 18-35; SL, 87).
- To be an apostle, following Christ (cf. CDD, 18-19ff, 27, 61-63; GA, 41; SL, 47-48).
- 3. The evangelical counsels, with a view to mission (cf. CDD, 66-70; GA, 42; SL, 166).
 - a) Poverty: vow common life dependence sense of poverty apostolic value (CDD, 87-111; GA, 46; SL, 168).
 - b) Chastity: vow celibacy for the Kingdom significance in other ways celibacy and community life (CDD, 71-86; GA, 45; SL, 167).
 - c) Obedience: vow God's will to be sought authority as service obedience and mission: sending, link between them (CDD, 112-114, 121-123, 125, 146-153; GA, 47; SL, 169).

Questions

- 6. Consecration and apostolate. How do you see the link between these two? Is apostolate an expression of one's consecration?
- 7. Poverty. What do you consider essential in the way one lives one's poverty? What elements should be brought out in the context of conditions today?
- 8. Chastity, celibacy. What, do you think, is its meaning and value in our apostolic life? Are there some particular aspects that should be stressed today?
- 9. Obedience. How do you see the link between obedience and mission? Is it essential?

2.2

B) APOSTOLATE

The Chapters have already done an important work of updating in this field (cf. CDD, 1-60, 327-427; GA,1-20; SL, 8-84). On most aspects of it, confreres have already expressed their views in their replies to the questionnaire *Our Spiritan Life* for the 1980 Chapter. There are still some questions to clarify, and others to develop, and these are mentioned in this section.

2.1 Participation in the Church's missionary activity

Several points merit further reflection: openness to universal mission; the choice of "missionary situations" and the criteria for this choice; new or recent fields of apostolate; the integration of education in the Common Project; commitments in the home Provinces; diversification of our commitments; the place and specific role of the consecrated layman. Cf. especially: CDD, 1-7, 379-406 (Our Missionary Activity); GA, 2-20; SL, 55-68 (Orientations and Priorities), 69-84 (Justice and Peace).

. 2 Evangelization

In the study of Mission today, special attention is paid to inculturation, dialogue, exchange, liberation – themes connected with the growing influence of the Churches of the 'southern hemisphere'. Openness to the world about us was stressed by our recent Chapter, and missionary institutes are showing a greater desire to commit themselves to 'frontier situations'. Importance is also given to the witness of one's own life.

Cf. CDD (the nos. mentioned above); GA, '4, 5, 9, 14; SL, 61 and also 47-54 (the understanding of our mission today), especially 51 (an exodus, a meeting with the 'other').

2.3 Relations with local Churches

It will be necessary to clarify our different loyalties – to the Congregation, the local Church and the universal Church: how we can be faithful to them all, with a minimum of clashes.

Cf. CDD, 3-13, 415, 410, 429; GA, 10, 11, 15; SL, 57 especially, and 117.

2.2.4 Cooperation with others

Working with others is becoming more and more a feature of missionary life: working with the local Church, with other institutes, with missionary organizations, with other religions, with all men and women of good will, and especially in the field of ecumenism. This aspect must also find expression in our new Constitutions. Cf. CDD, 16, 425-426; GA, 17, 94; SL, 22, 48.

2.2.5 Other points

- Missionary animation and vocations: CDD, 11-12, 374-375, 416-418; GA, 19; SL, 141-148.
- At the service of the Congregation: CDD, 11, 12, 374-375; GA, 19, 141; SL, 218.
- Common project and personal project: GA, 22, 23, 60; SL, 63-65, 152, 169, 178.

Questions

Among the points to be clarified or developed, we would like to call attention to the following:

- 10. What are the works or missionary situations that you recognize as suitable for Spiritans? Could you draw up a simple list? What elements would you highlight?
- 11. From Poullart des Places down to our time, Spiritans have always been involved in educational work (poor clerics, seminaries, colleges, universities), and the Chapters have recognized this ministry (cf. e.g., SL, 39, 78, 81, 146, 217). In spite of this long tradition, there are tensions in the Congregation on the subject. In what way do you think the new Constitutions could or should try to solve the issue?
- 12. Do you think that our Chapters have sufficiently clarified our respective loyalties to the Congregation and to our local Church (both of origin and of our missionary work)? If not, what would you suggest?
- 13. What elements should go to the making up of a real 'common project' at the level of the Congregation, of the Province or District, of the local community?

2.3

C) COMMUNITY LIFE

Spiritan sources on community life are abundant. Apart from replies to Chapter questionnaires and other sources, cf. CDD, 36-60, 248-272; GA, 64-90; SL, 85-103. It would be unreasonable to ask confreres again for their views on this subject. However, it might help the Committee if the main tendencies were picked out from these sources: e.g. the growing tendency towards apostolic community, towards greater sharing at all levels, towards a life that is both deeper and more open to others, towards engagement in various milieus and loyalty to these, towards diversification in types of community and community lifestyle. The following plan is proposed:

2.3.1 Community of life

- In general: cf. CDD, 45-60, 248; GA, 43, 64-90; SL, 170-172.
- Particular persons or groups (e.g. the sick, retired confreres): cf. CDD, 15, 48, 316-317; GA, 97-102, 171;
 SL, 44.
- The families of confreres: cf. CDD, 109.

2.3.2 Community of prayer

Cf. CDD, 57, 126-143; GA, 29-39; SL, 86; and also the prayers for our dead.

2.3.3 Spiritan membership

Membership through Profession (CDD, 13-14) – desire to belong to a community of faith, an apostolic community (CDD, 52-54, 292) – rights and duties (CDD, 280-282) – lifelong membership, absence or separation from the Institute (CDD, 49, 289; GA, 103-107).

2.3.4 Other forms of apostolic and spiritual membership

Cf CDD, 14; GA, 61 63; St, 61, 101 103.

Questions

3.0

3.1

3.1.4

- 14. Should there be a special paragraph on prayer?
- 15. New forms of membership have been encouraged by the Chapters and tried out in a few circumscriptions. What should we say about them in the Constitutions?

Part III: INITIAL AND ONGOING FORMATION

The following points call attention to the main ideas expressed in CDD, 329-376, GA Annex, and SL, 139-213.

A) MAIN LINES OF SPIRITAN FORMATION

- Formation is the process of conversion and personal growth, expressing itself in a commitment to follow Christ in the Congregation (SL, 149-152). It is the work of a whole lifetime.
- All aspects of this process receive inspiration and unity from the apostolic life, which is its aim (SL, 154; CDD, 330-333, 336-337).
- 1.3 Formation tries to instil the moral, intellectual, spiritual and apostolic qualities required for lifelong fidelity to one's Spiritan vocation.
 - The Congregation comprises consecrated laymen and priests, with varying personal talents. Because of the variety of missionary situations, formation should be marked by both UNITY and DIVERSITY (SL, 173-181, 196).
 - As the Congregation is an international fraternal community with a transcultural mission, formation should include an INTERNATIONAL aspect (SL, 201-205, 212; CDD, 352-354).

B) INITIAL FORMATION

- The educative process of formation is described in SL, 153. Cf. also SL, 154-177; CDD, 338-346.
- Those in overall charge of formation are the Superior General and the Provincial Councils. It is up to them to give dynamism and unity to Spiritan formation and to lay down the general guidelines (SL, 182-185).
 - .3 Those in charge of formation should be well trained for their task and, within each area, should work together as a team (SL, 186-195; CDD, 343).
 - Work for vocations is a service to the local Church and is the first step in formation (SL, 139-148; CDD, 374-376).
 - .5 Some stages of formation (pre-novitiate, apostolic experience and specialization) differ in length and in the order in which they take place in the different regions (SL, 196, 198; CDD, 347-351).
 - .6 NOVITIATE: aim criteria for admission (SL, 197, 148) length nature of commitment at the end of the novitiate who receives the commitment length of commitment.
- 2.7 PERPETUAL PROFESSION: By his perpetual profession, a definitive consecration to the apostolate, a Spiritan becomes a full member of the Congregation.

C) ONGOING FORMATION

(Cf. CDD, 357-373; GA Annex; SL, 206-213.)

Ongoing formation is needed because of changes in the world and in the Church, the continual evolution of a issues, and the importance of renewing crossiff constantly at all levels.

- 3.3.2 Responsibility for ongoing formation falls both on the individual confrere and on his superiors.
- 3.3.3 Means for ensuring ongoing formation.

Questions

- 16. What do you think should be said in the new Constitutions about internationality in formation?
- 17. Candidates for Spiritan life differ in origin, education and culture, and will have differing ministries (as consecrated laymen or as priests). What should be said about unity and diversity in the formation of young Spiritans?
- 18. What should the new Constitutions say about ongoing formation?

4.0 Part IV: SPIRITAN AUTHORITY AS SERVICE

In this part and in the following, it has been possible to draw up a more detailed plan. Although legal elements are naturally more in evidence here, it will be necessary to keep an inspirational aspect even in these parts. It would be good to include:

- some texts from Scripture: Mt. 20: 25-28; Jn. 19: 10-11; Eph. 4: 11-16; 1 Pet. 5: 1-3;
- and from Libermann:

"Superiors should consider themselves as servants whom Our Lord has given to their brothers to look after them constantly and see that they lack nothing that they need for their physical or spiritual welfare... The rule that includes all others, and the model that they will try to follow, will be Our Lord among his Apostles and how He would act" (Règle Prov., N.D. II, 317, 320).

4.1

A) AUTHORITY AND GOVERNMENT

(General principles: CDD, 146-147)

Authority as service

- Authority and obedience; mission and obedience (CDD, 113-117, 52).
- Seeking of God's will by all (CDD, 123; GA, 47).
 Realism in faith (CDD, 118-119, 122, 125).
 The Superior as the first one to be obedient.
- Respect for the person, for persons, groups, minorities, majorities (CDD, 124-152; GA, 24, 39, 60, 73, 111; SL, 87).
- Authority at the service of decisions to be taken and carried out after dialogue between men of God (CDD, 148, 151).
- Authority at the service of unity in diversity; authority as witness of a wider community (GA, 26, 54, 87).
- Authority at the service of fraternal communion and true brotherhood in an international institute (CDD, 45).
- Authority at the service of information and communication (CDD, 146-149, 187; GA, 28, 75, 82-85, 110b, 123, 139).
- Authority at the service of animation (CDD, 148, 185; GA, 121, 126).

Personal authority; Councils; Chapters.

Solidarity (CDD, 58-59; GA, 110c, 138).

Subsidiarity.

Inight of appeal.

B) DESCRIPTION OF THE STRUCTURES OF THE CONGREGATION

Dependence on the Holy See – Institute of Pontifical right (Const., 5, 10). The different structures of the Institute (CDD, 147, 190-193).

4.3 C) GOVERNMENT

General Chapter (CDD, 154-165; GA, 112-117).

Superior General (CDD, 170-173; SL, 227-229).

General Council (CDD, 167-169, 174-189, 293; GA, 118-130; SL, 225-226, 230-235).

General Functionaries (GA, 144-145).

Enlarged Councils (GA, 131-137; SL, 220-224).

Provincial and District Chapters (CDD, 190-247; GA, 157-163; SL, 214-219, 229).

Principal Communities.

Groups (GA, 156).

Spiritan Foundations (SL, 104-138).

Local Communities (CDD, 248-272; GA, 160-166).

Questions

- 19. From 1968-69 to 1980, a substantial evolution has taken place in the government of the Congregation, with a movement towards decentralization, subsidiarity, solidarity, coresponsibility. Do you think that the last General Chapter (SL) has given satisfactory expression to the form of government suited to the Congregation? Are there points where a balance needs to be re-established?
- 20. The Spiritan Foundations (presented in SL, 104-108) are an important innovation and will have a bearing on several questions to be treated in the Constitutions. Could you point out these questions and the elements that will have to be taken into account?
- 21. How would you describe the form of service that the authority of a local Superior should take?

Part V: TEMPORAL GOODS

(Const., 25-27)

A) SPIRITAN ATTITUDES

Material goods at the service of evangelization (CDD, 2, 88, 92, 106, introd. to chap. VII; GA, 167). Individual poverty (simplicity) and community poverty (community witness) (CDD, 89-91, 99, 105, 108). Responsibility and involvement of all (CDD, 102, introd. to chap. VII; GA, 167; SL, 168).

Charity, justice, real care for the poor (CDD, 93, 393, 410-411; SL, 78).

Solidarity (CDD, 109; GA, 138b, 167).

Faith in Providence and provision for the future (Latin Rule, 42-43).

B) OWNERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION OF GOODS

2.1 Spiritan temporal goods (CDD, introd. to chap. VII, notes at end of chap. VII).

Ownership of these goods: goods of the Congregation (Const., 226-238; CDD, 319-320 and notes). The Congregation, Provinces, Districts, Principal Communities, Local Communities (CDD, 321).

Administration of the goods (CDD, 294-296), always in accordance with canon law, the Constitutions and civil law. Administration by the Superiors, and by the Bursars under the responsibility of the Superiors (CDD, 99). Budgets, accounts and balance sheets. Capital funds, investments (justice to be observed), reserve funds, inventories (CDD, 300). Allocations. Insurance of property, health and old-age insurance. Personal contribution (CDD, 318; GA, 168). Training for administration; competence.

Contracts with dioceses and works employing Spiritans (CDD, 321-337, 422).

Goods of the community and of non-Spiritan works (CDD, 319-320).

.. 2 Inheritances

Their administration and use; willis, remanciation of infloriance (CDD, 110)

C) THE VARIOUS BURSARS

(CDD, 294-302)

The General Bursar (CDD, 303-308). Provincial and District Bursars (CDD, 309-313).

Local Bursars (CDD, 314-318). Procurators.

Questions

- 22. The 1980 General Chapter drew up a text on 'Justice and Peace' (SL, 69-84). On the basis of your reflection on temporal goods, what elements from this text do you think should be included in the new Constitutions?
- 23. We speak and write easily about the poor. How should we express our commitment to them and our solidarity and sharing with them?
- 24. It is often said that we should give a collective and community witness on behalf of the underprivileged. What should we say and do in practice?
- 25. The poor have no 'reserves' or 'capital'. Has the Congregation, as a body, the right to have these?
- 26. How can we ensure solidarity with the poorer circumscriptions, in really practical terms?
- 27. What do you think of the 'personal contribution'? Should it be maintained, modified or suppressed? Why?

6.0

FINAL QUESTIONS

- 28. The Congregation will have a body of law comprising: a) a RULE (first book), which is stable and can be modified only by three-quarters of the votes of a General Chapter and with the assent of the Holy See; and b) a DIRECTORY (second book), which is less stable and can be modified by a simple majority in a General Chapter. Should these two parts be:
 - two volumes, separately bound, or
 - a single book divided into two separate parts, or
 - a single book with each question divided into two parts, with different type to indicate what is stable and what is less so?
- 29. What do you think of the five-part plan for the Constitutions outlined in this document? Is it complete? Are there points to be added or omitted? What further details should be included?
- 30. What sort of style should the text use: impersonal ("The Spiritan..." "Spiritans...") or personal ("We", "You", "I")?
- 31. We are among the few Congregations to have a Latin Rule in addition to our Constitutions a heritage from the older Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Poullart des Places and Bouic). Should we keep this or drop it? Why? If we keep it, should we reproduce it just as it is, in Latin, or translate it as it is, or adapt it? Should we put it as an introduction, or as an appendix?

We remind you that replies to the questionnaire must be received by the Generalate by 31 JANUARY 1982. They may be made out by an individual confrere, a group of confreres, a Provincial or District Council, or a whole circumscription (it is important to specify which). Thank you in advance.

I/D 28

THE GENERALATE TEAM

June 1981

THE AFRICAN FOUNDATIONS

Libermann's vision being fulfilled

Change. Shift of the centres of vitality. Ageing personnel. Decrease in numbers. These are all facts of the missionary situation today.

The accelerated pace of change, the unbalancing shift of the centres of vitality and the painful and inescapable

decrease in numbers have led many Congregations to begin Foundations in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

The emphasis at the moment is on formation. Especially in Africa the stress is on (a) internationality, with regional groupings, and (b) readiness to make use of local facilities (diocesan senior seminaries, colleges and universities), while living in one's own residence.

Spiritan Foundations

Spiritans are part of this movement, and for eleven years now we have had Foundations in the 'Southern Hemisphere'. Some are at a reasonable stage of maturity, some are still in their infancy, and others in embryo. Chronologically they stand as follows:

- 1970 BRAZILIAN FOUNDATION (the six Districts) -
- 19 students, 5 priests. EAST AFRICAN FOUNDATION (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Malawi, with the integration of Kongolo-Zaīre being considered) - 37 students,
- 1977 CENTRAL AFRICAN FOUNDATION (Cameroon, Gabon, RCA and Congo) – 8 students, of whom 3 will be ordained this year.
- 1978 PUERTO RICAN FOUNDATION Il pre-novitiate
- students, 3 novices.
 WEST AFRICAN FOUNDATION (Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Makurdi, Kwara-Benue) 15 students
- 1981 INDIAN OCEAN FOUNDATION (Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion). The novitiate will open in September 1982, and there are six prospective

In Brazil, the recent annual meeting (Jan. 1981) declared: "What is said on new Foundations in the 1980 Chapter documents makes us recognize in our own situation here the presence of a Brazilian Spiritan Foundation. We do not know in advance all the ways of the Spirit and we realize that we shall need time and patience and have to accept uncertainty, but we wish to continue along this road." They hope that the Foundation will be a catalyst for bringing together all the Brazilian Districts.

The map is impressive. The achievements are already substantial. Indeed, "a new era has begun". One cannot resist saying with Mary: "I exult in the Lord... He does great things." This Information/Documentation focuses on the Foundations as they exist in Africa. They have a common qualifier: African - with problems and concerns that are specifically African. The other Foundations, no loss important, will be due to die a future I/D

Authentically African

Western missionary presence is still strong in Africa (some 30,000 missionaries), but there has been more and more questioning as to the continued appropriateness "The Churches of the Third World must be allowed to find their own identity, and the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to this self-hood of the Church" (G. H. Anderson). While there are areas where the local Church is hardly developed and where missionaries are still needed, there are others where a withdrawal of missionaries helps the local Church to find its own feet and to flourish as it could never do if it remained under too strong a foreign influence.

African politicians and intellectuals are generally in favour of reducing the missionary presence, and political crises of one sort or another have in fact brought about an exodus of missionaries from several areas, such as Guinea, Eastern Nigeria, Southern Sudan, Ethiopia and Mozambique.

The number of African priests and religious is growing steadily (3,700 African priests in 1975) and in many countries the episcopate is entirely, or almost entirely, Africanized. As Pope Paul VI said in Uganda in 1967: "We wish our presence among you to be a sign of our recognition of your maturity. You Africans are by this time your own missionaries. The Church of Christ is truly planted in this blessed land." And as long ago as 1919, Pope Benedict XV wrote: "In places where the local clergy is sufficiently numerous and properly trained, one may say that the work of the missionary is over and the Church successfully planted" (quoted by Fr. Pierre SCHOUVER in L'Eglise et la Mission, 1975).

This very success of the missionaries of the past in planting the Church of Africa calls for a spirit of sacrifice in the missionaries of today: "He must increase, while I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). Bishop James SANGU of Mbeya, Tanzania, while appreciating the presence of foreign missionaries, did not hesitate to say to the 1974 Synod of Bishops in Rome that the establishing of the local Church requires that the local clergy assume more responsibilities and that expatriates be ever more willing to play a supporting role.

In sending his missionaries to preach in Africa, Libermann's intention was that they should train African price

and religious as soon as possible, and he would certainly be pleased to see not only the strength of the African diocesan clergy today, but the increasing numbers of Africans joining the ranks of his Congregation.

Here mention must be made of the two Provinces of Nigeria East and Angola. Nigeria East provides a striking example of what has been said above. In his report to the 1980 General Chapter, Fr. General referred to "the Igbo Church, with its more than 2,000,000 Catholics and an unparalleled flowering of sacerdotal and religious vocations", and said that "it is the glory of our Congregation, and most particularly of Bishop Shanahan and our Irish confreres, to have sown the seed which has produced so abundant a harvest". But it is also true that it was the closing of Eastern Nigeria to some 300 Irish Spiritans at the end of the Biafran War of 1967-70 that allowed the Church that they had planted so well to come to full maturity and to produce in addition a thriving Spiritan Province. The Province of Nigeria today counts one Bishop, 52 priests, 3 Brothers, 64 scholastics and 16 novices.

The Province of Angola is smaller and is struggling to establish itself in much more trying circumstances. It numbers at present 12 Fathers (of whom 4 Angolans), 2 Brothers, 6 theologians, 4 philosophers and 7 postulants. Like the Province of Nigeria it runs a juniorate.

Towards a Definition

"The word 'Foundation' is new in Spiritan terminology... (and is) used to describe the beginning of a structure for the training of Spiritan candidates in their own areas, with a view ultimately to the establishment of a Province' (General Bulletin 776, p. 225).

In his report to the General Chapter, Fr. General said: "The term 'Foundation' stands for a new kind of thing: works of formation for African Spiritans, set up under the responsibility of several Districts which collaborate in the formation program. These works are destined to become a new structural organization as they develop, distinct from the founding Districts, entitled to receive new members for profession and probably later on to replace the present Districts" (p. 32).

For its part, the General Chapter preferred not to attempt a strict definition, but listed rather some common characteristics of Foundations (SL, 110-114), leaving them a certain freedom to develop according to local conditions.

The Foundations

"See how I lay in Zion a stone of witness, a precious cornerstone, a foundation stone" (ls. 28:16)

The history of the Spiritan Foundations in Africa has been dealt with in Spiritan News (July-August 1979) and also, here and there, in past I/Ds. The Foundations were the principal theme of the three recent meetings of Major Superiors in Africa, a report on which appeared in the April-May 1981 issue of Spiritan News. This year, therefore, may be called 'the year of the Foundations', and an attempt will be made here to give a fuller picture of them in the light of recent developments.

The East African Foundation

Although the Foundations are new, the idea of an East African Province was raised as long ago as 1963 by the five Tanzanian Spiritans of the time (all Europeantrained) and was discussed between the Generalate and the Districts of Kilimanjaro, Bagamoyo and Kenya. In a letter of June 1969 the Tanzanian Spiritans again raised the question. The 1970 District Chapter of Kilimanjaro adopted their proposal of a Foundation and invited postulants, several of whom presented themselves. The Generalate welcomed the idea and, at a meeting at Usa River (Arusha Diocese, Tanzania) in 1972 between Fr. LECUYER and the three Principal Superiors of East Africa (Frs. Thomas TUNNEY, Kilimanjaro, Joseph DE BOER, Bagamoyo, and Paul CUNNINGHAM, Kenya), it was decided that the Foundation would be the common responsibility of the three Superiors. The Superior of the Zambia Group, Fr. Anthony HEEREY, also later became associated with it.

The novitiate opened at Usa River in 1973, with Fr. Pat RYAN as novice master, and six novices, in a house donated by Bishop Denis DURNING, C.S.Sp., of The novitiate moved to a new site, at Magamba Arusha. The novitiate moved to a new site, at Magamba (in the Usambara Mountains, Tanga Diocese, Tanzania), in 1978, and in the same year a residence for theologians was built near the Kenyan interdiocesan seminary at

Langata (Nairobi).

Fr. TUNNEY was appointed 'Executive Officer' of the Foundation in 1977 - the unusual title of the post being chosen to imply that, as Superior of the Foundation, he was representing the other Principal Superiors as well. He was succeeded in 1980 by Fr. Chris PROMIS, the new

Principal Superior of Kilimanjaro.

Seven of the nine young Spiritan Fathers from the Foundation have been appointed to Zambia, to mark its missionary orientation from the beginning. At the same time those responsible for the Foundation are very much aware of the need to allow its Eart African dimension to take root, develop and flourish (SL, 132).

The Central African Foundation

At the second meeting of the Pan-African Conference of Spiritans, held in Yaoundé in December 1976, the main topic discussed was indigenization within the Congregation and the need for local houses of formation. The proposals of the meeting were taken up two months later at the meeting in Bangui, in February 1977, of the French-speaking Principal Superiors, and it was decided that a 'Fondation d'Afrique Francophone' would be set up, under the joint responsibility of the Superiors of the Congo, Gabon, Yaoundé, Doumé, Bangui and Senegal. The novitate opened at Essos, a suburb of Yaoundé, in September 1977 with four novices (two from Cameroon, one from Gabon and one from Senegal), who had all already completed a two-year course in philosophy. novice master was Fr. René DES DESERTS, with Fr. Nicolas GOBINA, a Cameroonian, as assistant novice master. The professed students follow their courses at the Biayenda Regional Seminary in Brazzaville, Congo.

In 1979 two candidates from Equatorial Guinea

presented themselves, and these did their novitiate (1979-80) at Linzolo (Congo), under Fr. Auguste DURAND. 1980-81 the novitiate has again moved back to Cameroon, but this time to Akono (Yaoundé), with Fr. René CHARRIER as novice master. (Fr. CHARRIER, as Principal Superior of the Congo, was Superior of the Foundation from 1 July 1978 until he was succeeded in both capacities by Fr. Joseph WOLLENSCHNEIDER in October 1980.)

With the setting up of the West African Foundation in 1979, Senegal decided to join the new Foundation, and the 'Fondation d'Afrique Francophone' changed its name The particular problem to Central African Foundation. of this Foundation is the relationship of its members to the diocesan seminarians. This has helped them to discover their Spiritan identity and compels them to bring something original to the local Church: their missionary vocation and the witness of unity in their inter-racial community.

The West African Foundation

The decision to set up a third Foundation was taken at a meeting of Major Superiors of West Africa, held in Dakar in April 1979. It was decided that all the Major Superiors of West Africa would be responsible for it, but that the Superiors of Gambia (Fr. John HOGAN) and Senegal (Fr. Jean DAVIET) would have special responsibility.

The West African Foundation has added a further international dimension in being both English- and French-speaking, and the two novice masters, Fr. Hugh DAVOREN (of the English Province) and Fr. Joseph DE ROBILLARD (a Mauritian of the French Province), are both bilingual.

The novitiate opened at Bwiam, near Banjul (Gambia) on 15 August 1980 with six novices (four from Ghana, one from Makurdi, Nigeria, and one from Senegal). The siting of the novitiate near Banjul is historically fitting, as if was in Banjul (Bathurst) that the first African Spiritan, Fr. Jean LACOMBE, was born, on 28 Oct. 1829, of a

French father and a Senegalese mother. He entered the Holy Ghost Seminary in Paris on 1 Oct. 1848, when Fr. Libermann was Superior, and was ordained by Bishop Kobès in 1852. He made his profession in the Congregation in 1857 and worked in Banjul.

The bilingualism of the Foundation poses a problem,

The bilingualism of the Foundation poses a problem, and one may ask if it is really workable. "Being bilingual is not easy and good preparation is absolutely essential, because without a basic grasp of the other language there is always a frustrating struggle for words" (Fr. Hugh DAVOREN).

Formation

As mentioned above, the East African Foundation has already produced nine priests, and one of these (Fr. Paul CHUWA), after some missionary work in Zambia, has been sent to Duquesne University for three years to prepare him for a post of responsibility in the Foundation.

The numbers now in formation are as follows:

1st Pre-Philosophy: 2nd Pre-Philosophy: 7 1st Philosophy: 2nd Philosophy: 5 Novitiate: 5 1st Theology: 6 2nd Theology: 4 0 3rd Theology: 4th Theology: 1 37

The Pre-Philosophy course is given at Usa River (Arusha Diocese), with Fr. Tom TUNNEY in charge. For Philosophy the students go on to Kibosho Seminary (Moshi Diocese), where they study under the direction of Fr. Brendan CRONIN. The novitiate is done at Magamba (Tanga Diocese), under Fr. Pat RYAN, who has been novice master since the first novitiate in 1973. Finally, for Theology the scholastics go to Kenya, where they attend the national seminary at Langata, near Nairobi, and live in a Spiritan residence with Fr. Tom McDONALD as director.

In the **Central African Foundation** there are three novices at Akono (Yaoundé), and five professed scholastics (two philosophers and three theologians) at the Emile Biayenda Seminary, Brazzaville. These live in a community house near the Seminary, with Fr. René TABARD as director.

Apart from the five novices now at Bwiam, the West African Foundation has one theologian from Makurdi at Langata, Nairobi. Post-novitiate studies will be done at the Spiritan House of Philosophy at Isienu, Nigeria, in a spirit of collegial responsibility. The major seminary at Sebikhotane, Senegal, is being considered for theology. The authorities are to be approached for a possible Spiritan house there, and, if this fails, other areas will be explored. The pre-novitiate is done with the 'Pères des Saints Apôtres' at Otele, Cameroon. Ghana is being considered as a permanent site for pre-novitiate formation.

As can be seen, the members of the Foundations study at various seminaries. The tendency in Africa now is towards regionalization of the major seminaries — usually as affiliates of the Urban University, Rome, for the purpose of granting degrees. Regionalization provides considerable savings in money and personnel. Religious Congregations likewise save money and personnel by sending their scholastics to study at these regional seminaries.

Another advantage is that the scholastics, by going through their formation in different seminaries, get used to the mobility and internationality of missionary life. By studying side by side with diocesan seminarians from their own cultural backgrounds they also establish close links with the local Churches and this is important for their future work

On the other hand, one may ask whether this system allows the students of our Foundations sufficient opportunity to nurture the seed sown in the novitiate. curricula of the seminaries are outside our control and are geared to meet the degree requirements of the Urban University. There may be excessive stress on speculative theology, to the detriment of pastoral theology and mis-If the Congregation wants to be implanted in the African soil in the way it envisages for itself, should it not have its own houses of formation where it has full control of the training program? In spite of its benefits, does the present system of appendage to regional seminaries not run the risk of, producing diocesan priests under As the numbers in formation in the guise of Spiritans? each Foundation are still small, it would not be possible for each to have its own scholasticate, but would it be worthwhile considering the possibility of a single senior scholasticate common to all the Foundations? Our presence in these regional senior seminaries is becoming problematic as our numbers grow.

Another point to be noted is that in our own formation programs expatriate missionaries still hold the key positions. This is to be expected, seeing that the Foundations are still young, but the sooner local personnel moves up to the key positions the better it will be.

Cultural Formation

"An important element is to ensure their formation in the local or regional cultural context" (SL, 111).

Culture is the operative word in the Foundations.

"Culture is the totality of the way of life of a given people. Its ingredients include languages, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organizations, inherited artefacts, technical progress, moral values and religion" (AFER, Aug. 1979, p. 216).

At first sight the Foundations may seem to be regions with the same cultural heritage. But this is far from true, even where a common language provides a link. In the labyrinth of culture in Africa, language is only one element. Swahili, French and English may be the principal media of communication, but to be trained in them does not mean to be trained in one's culture. In East Africa, Swahili is an administrative language; in Central Africa, French is foreign; and in West Africa, English and French are equally foreign. The tribal system in turn engenders a multitude of cultural trends and characteristics that make it difficult to have a common cultural formation. To have Masai, Chaggas, Kikuyus, Creoles, Mendes, Tivs, Igallas, Ashantis, Chewas, Tongas etc. studying together does not make for the proper training of each group in their own cultural heritage. Thus the Foundations' formation program tends to create a melting pot situation instead of a formation which is truly incarnated in the local culture. Yet it is probably true that the emphasis should be placed on internationality rather than on 'settledness' in a local culture

Vocations

"You should not be fishing in the basket but in the river" (Mgr. BALA)

Methods of promoting vocations differ considerably in the Foundations.

In the East African Foundation, candidates are accepted from the junior seminaries and secondary schools on the completion of their Fourth Year. The Fifth and Sixth Years (equivalent to A-Level work), with emphasis on language and literature, are done at Usa River as the Pre-Philosophy course

In the Central African Foundation the normal procedure is to accept candidates who have already completed their philosophy (though the two candidates from Equatorial Guinea had not done so). There are several aspirants from Cameroon and the Congo at present studying philosophy in the local seminaries. Mgr. BALA's remark, however, that we should be fishing in the river and not in the basket is not without justification, and Mgr. ZOA recently encouraged us to greater "apostolic aggressivity".

In the West African Foundation vocations are sought at the level of the secondary schools, and each country has its own program. The most successful program so far has been in Ghana, where, apart from the three novices at Bwiam, there are four postulants (three of them at the pre-novitiate stage in Cameroon) and 23 aspirants doing their secondary studies. The Vocations Director, Fr. Declan DORR, described the program as follows:

"The favourite method is personal contact: through retreats preached in schools and at the junior seminary and through the aspirants themselves. During term-time contact is maintained by correspondence. The whole

group came together at Christmas for a two-day meeting, the first day being a retreat and the second a celebration. During the last long vacation (June-September) the aspirants were assigned in groups of six or so to the Spiritan parishes for pastoral work. There they were sent in twos to the outstations. For this period they were given a structure of common life together: morning and evening prayer, readings. The whole lasted for two to three weeks, after which all reported together to a convenient school. A two-day retreat followed, during which all were seen individually by the Vocations Director. The meeting ended with a celebration in which the Fathers joined."

An important question in the matter of vocations is whether the Foundations should open their own juniorates. In 1963, when the possibility of starting an East African Province was suggested, Fr. Dan CARRON, the District Superior of Eastern Nigeria, was asked his advice and he replied: "I cannot see how a Province can be started without a juniorate." It is true that juniorates are out of fashion nowadays and that they require money and personnel, but the success of the Province of Nigeria East sprang largely from its juniorate, and the Province of Angola is taking the same direction. In Africa, junior seminaries are a 'conditio sine qua non' for steady growth. "If we do not have our own structures, especially in the early formative stages, it is just that we do not want to admit to ourselves that there is a difference between a child nurtured by the mother - a loving mother - and that brought up in a day-care centre."

Finance

in 1979, Fr. Joseph DE BOER, who had been one of the founders of the East African Foundation, was brought to the Generalate to promote the financing of the Foundations. He made contacts with various funding agencies, which have been generous in their support, and the annual 'Cor Unum' allocations from the Generalate have also helped.

However, the Foundations will be truly African only when they can dispense with outside help, and there must be an effort towards self-reliance. In Tanzania, a country where self-reliance is a political principle, the East African Foundation started a farm project of 140 acres

of arable land at Tengeru.

However, our record with farm projects has not been encouraging, and some have questioned the suitability of farming as a means of raising money for the Foundations. Other productive projects could be considered, but, whatever the means adopted, there should be serious attempts to reduce the need for funding from abroad.

Further Questions

Apart from questions already raised, there are other questions that come to mind.

The juridical status of the Foundations is a concern. They are destined to grow into Provinces. When will this take place? Where will the Provincialate be located? Will local rivalries spring up between the countries involved? Will the large areas covered be a handicap? Should the members always be sent as missionaries outside their own countries, or should they work in their own countries, where they have closer contact with the local culture? Are the older African confreres being sufficiently consulted and are they being given sufficient responsibility in the Foundations?

As a long-term exercise, can we maintain the present system of recruiting in secondary schools? Is it not an anomaly that we do not want to appear to be in competition with local Bishops by establishing juniorates and yet we recruit from their seminaries?

The 'migratory' system of running the Foundations is estrable. "Rolling stones gather no moss." Yet what do we do about giving the Foundations stability?

These and many other questions

These and many other questions have to be faced and resolved as time goes on. However, it remains that the African Foundations, along with the two African Provinces and similar Foundations in Brazil and Puerto Rico, are providing a welcome rejuvenation of the Congregation. The recent Spiritan News documentation on Formation (March 1981) pointed out that, of the 400 young Spiritans now in formation 200 are from the 'Southern Hemisphere' now in formation, 200 are from the 'Southern Hemisphere'. The mustard seed is beginning to grow into a tree.

"Increase and multiply."

The Foundations are not only signs of a shift of the 'centres of vitality' within the Congregation but also an indication of the fecundity of the Congregation in its former mission lands and its readiness to propagate and per-petuate itself in them. This is in the nature of things. The great appreciation given by the 1980 General Chapter to Spiritan presence in both homispheres reveals the

general desire of all confreres to see the Congregation "increase and multiply". "Widen the space of your tent" (ls. 54:2). The Foundations should be close to every Spiritan's heart and should be nurtured with genuine interest and care.

THE GENERAL ATE TEAM

I/D 29

THE GENERALATE TEAM

October 1981

Spiritans for Tomorrow

We have a dream. To take up the area of Formation is to speak of our dreams, our visions for the future. It is to move beyond the reality of what we are to the hope of what we can be, of who we are becoming. It is more than that. It is to accept the challenge of tracing the hidden lines of a new world struggling to come to birth. It is indeed presumptuous, for there is too much of prophetic pretension in all this, but speak we must.

A dialogue of hope

The Chapter of 1980, in its conscious movement towards the future, placed formation as a major priority of the animation of the General Council. Convinced of the ultimate seriousness of the enterprise and with great admiration for the enormous amount of progress which has been made in programs of formation throughout the Congregation, we propose to initiate an ongoing dialogue of hope, first of all with those who continue to devote themselves to the work of formation, and then with all the confreres. It is a dialogue which must look ahead to the year 2000 and far beyond. It is a dialogue which cannot rest comfortably in the false securities of history or in present achievements, but which must increase the momentum of our communal conversion to the one security, the one absolute: the Gospel Kingdom of Jesus, the Lord of history.

Over the past 15 years those close to formation work as well as interested observers from a distance have experienced deaths too numerous to capture in print: the loss of venerable and revered institutions, the confusion over values, the questioning of everything, drastic reductions in the numbers of our students, confrontations between authorities and students, between 'them' and 'us', departures of formation personnel.

But we have survived. There has been a passover to new life. We have not resolved all problems nor have we arrived at the Promised Land, but we do have formation programs throughout the Congregation today where there is an environment of serious pursuit of Spiritan values on the part of students and formation personnel working together in mutual respect and fraternity. What is more, there is a joyful presence to the One Master in an attitude of prayerful and open discernment of His will for the community. With regard to the value of community, there is a quiet revolution taking place among younger confreres which holds a challenge for all of us. Ideals of community life which have been held in theory are taking on flesh among the young of today.

Christ's preferential option for the poor and the oppressed is taken seriously into account in the lifestyle and environment of houses of formation. Those responsible for formation are at ease in their role of brother as well as guide, with a specific role of servant authority (we no longer fear the word) in the community (cf. SL, 189).

And the new Foundations are a sign of hope holding special challenges to rethink, reevaluate and redo what to the Western mind has been taken too much for granted.

Some lessons we have learned

Would it not be correct to say that the pain of the last fifteen years has been an opportunity for learning: for learning that formation is more concerned with 'being' than with 'doing'; that conversion takes place within, in the internal acceptance of values rather than in external conformity to a rule; for learning that the spirit of God speaks in the voice of the young as well as in the voice of authorities, and needs to be tested no less. Have we not learned that formation is person-centred and not structure-centred? Is not each candidate a gift from God to the Congregation? Have we not learned that his needs must be recognized, that he must be appreciated and affirmed in his uniqueness, personality, background, talents, values and aspirations, that his affective development must be given greater attention.

For the most part formation has followed the pattern of the Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection. "For the most part," because all is not sweetness and light. There are pockets of the Congregation where death is the reality and the tomb has not been emptied. There are areas where the suffering is great and the best efforts at vocation ministry and formation have only frustration to show for their efforts. There are formation personnel and major superiors who sense isolation and clouds of darkness in their struggle to revitalize and give new life to a Province.

There is another reality which we must face. There are confreres who for a variety of reasons have been wounded both psychologically and spiritually, whose response is to die inside to all that is alive and vital, who have lost their enthusiasm for

the Kingdom, for the mission of the Church, and for a joyful dwelling with others in community. Far from assigning blame, the Congregation must respond with compassionate concern.

The future

But we must also ask hard questions about formation, so that we may do our very best to instil joy and enthusiasm and zest for living in the environment of our formation communities. With all the qualities of the younger generation, it has been remarked that there is a fragility and sensitivity which must draw our attention. Is this capacity to be wounded that of the compassionate Christ and which we sum up in the word 'vulnerability', or is it a fragility which needs to be integrated with a fortitude and courageous boldness which will stand up to the inevitable cross of daily living?

The insights for formation which come from the Chapter of 1980 have great value because they come from the experience of those who have borne the burden and the joy of formation work. They give expression to a consensus over some hard learned truths, some vital truths about life and humanity. The agenda for formation must be given the context of the entire agenda of Spiritans 1980: Mission today, the universal mission of the Church and the common project of the Congregation; commitment to the poor and to work for Justice and Peace; the new Foundations; life in community and new forms of membership; internationality.

Let the world write the agenda. Above all the Chapter had its eyes turned toward the future. It would be contrary to the spirit of the Chapter to treat any of its documents as inscribed permanently in monumental marble. The formation document gives us a dynamic plan for the future, a presentation of where we have arrived in the formation experience in order to lead us to a new destiny. There are criteria which are crucial in the discernment of the way towards that future. There are signposts which give us direction toward the world of tomorrow, the traces of which are already with us, the ultimate form of which remains unknown to the most perceptive futurologist.

Formation for the future was a concern of the SEDOS Seminar on the Future of Mission this year: "Formation programs should not alienate candidates from the people with whom they are to work, especially the poor, by accommodating them to a more affluent class... Formation for leadership of communities should stress skills which facilitate communion, inaugurate social analysis, and empower people in the local Church. A new spirituality for mission will be needed to meet the challenges of the future... (This) includes not only individual practices of spirituality... but also the societal dimension of all these practices, particularly as they relate to justice."

And the World Council of Churches, in 1979, gave us a description of today's missionary as a "person of dialogue" who "listens to the other side, enters completely into the real life situations of people to discover their own questions, not ours; is ready and willing to give up our power and to give up the temptation to impose what we have to offer; sets aside our projects in order to discover with people their own projects; accepts the fact that we do not possess all the truth; has the ability to say yes to people in a creative and salvific way".

It is true that in the midst of much world confusion the young are searching for something, something which will challenge their idealism, their sense of the transcendent and their commitment to the creation of a better world. Even if the quest is often unrealistic and confused with countervalues, it is nonetheless a powerful force for the coming of the Kingdom. Even if we are referring to a minority, the young fishermen chosen by Jesus were a minority of twelve and were as confused as any generation which followed. In St. Luke we find the process of their formation. Jesus first places the disciples in contact with the world as it is, with its problems, with its situations of poverty and oppression, with the sin of the world. Then He places them in contact with Himself, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

We are all involved

If we do not respond to the deep thirst of today's generation for authentic communities, authentic communities will rise up without us. It would be wrong to believe that the Congregation can be renewed by formation alone. The renewal of every community must go hand in hand with the renewal of formation communities or we shall find ourselves in a dead-end situation doomed to frustration.

The formation community, and all communities, must be concerned with LISTENING as well as tell-

ing. Each student and each confrere carries his own sacred, private personal mystery which cannot be violated. At the same time we must offer a place to tell our stories, our stories which need to be told. When the community is rooted in Christ, when He is at the centre of the community, then there is true freedom, maturity and self-reliance. Only in Him are the tensions between intimacy and openness, between the personal and the hospitable, between a nurturing community and an apostolic community, harmonized and reconciled.

The formation community, and all communities, must allow QUESTIONING. In a world used to satellites, microscopes and computer technology, if we avoid questions about the core values, we take the risk of fostering unhappy geniuses who know everything except why they live. We must offer a place where the right questions, the critical questions of life and death, are raised. Our communities can become gathering places where the great question raisers can search out meaning without fear.

The formation community, and all communities, must be PLACES OF BROTHERHOOD: "To have companions of any kind suggests that a journey is being made, as indeed with all of us there is. It should be travelling toward gentleness, integrity and joyfulness, a destiny all of us long for but hesitate to imagine ourselves reaching, lest on arrival we be given new obligations to love. But, if we can travel with a band of inner companions, what tests can prove too demanding? It is not that the companions of our interior are meant to teach us matters of power and might. Instead we need them to share with us the wisdom of the obvious, to repeat and repeat for our stubborn minds what we never quite get right - that all of us are fragile, that the wealth of the planet should be shared justly and that nothing matters unless it is done with a perpetual fidelity to love" (James Dunning). The more stress-filled, competitive and intense the situations of today's world, the more difficult it is for one to find real communion with another person. But if the young do not find community during the years when they are trying to find their place and their vision in life, the life search may well be bitter instead of exciting, narrow-minded instead of mature, cold and calculating instead of open and receptive.

The Spiritan community of formation, and all communities, must strive with all haste and energy to offer COMMUNITY IN CHRIST, neither a hotel nor a

human-relations board. Closeness can be experienced as fearful and demands a careful guide to find the vital balance which can lead to life at the service of the world, in which one can be committed and open-minded at the same time, in which the missionary commitment and Spiritan availability will mean leaving people with whom real community has been shared.

The formation community, and all communities, must be a PLACE OF TRADITION. We must distinguish, with Jarislov Pelikan, traditions which are the dead faith of living people from traditions which are the living faith of dead people. We must share the 'where from' of our common story, our roots, the accumulated wisdom of our forebears. We must gather around the fire and share the inspiration of our Scriptures, of our ancestors: Des Places, Libermann, Laval and others. With so many views competing for our allegiance, we need our tradition and we need each other to tell us that it isn't crazy to believe that the good life for us is founded on poverty of spirit, purity of life, the listening to God's word enfleshed in the community, the fulness of mercy, hunger for justice and the making of peace. Our traditions will give us a clear-eyed view of today and will carry us with confidence into the world about to be born.

Our formation communities, and all communities, must be a GATHERING IN FAITH, a place where God's presence is seen in the personal story of the community and of each of its members, a place where the pains of the present are the birth pangs of the mystery of a new creation.

Finally, our formation communities, and all communities, are called to be a PLACE OF CELEBRA-TION, a place where we rejoice in the Good News for the world and a place where we rejoice over the gifts that God has given to each one of us.

Some concerns for formation

The overseas, or crosscultural, experience is a reality in almost all of the Provinces and has been of enormous benefit. Is there need for more guided reflection on the experience? Is there not the possibility of international collaboration to provide higher quality programs and more adequate structures? Let us think about it together.

Spiritual direction: the Chapter is not ambivalent (SL, 163). Each student should have a spiritual director (and is this not true for all of us?). Have not many previous experiences of spiritual direction been negative experiences to such an extent that they have become blocks to the exploration of present-day experiences of finding direction in the ways of God and a deeper faith insight into the needs of the world around us. The role of spiritual director differs significantly from the experiences which many Spiritans have had in the past. The spiritual director is the one who assists in the understanding, the objectifying and the articulating of the student's living of faith, hope and love, enabling him as a consequence to discern and respond to the motions from God experienced in

his own life within the context of the development of the Christian community. It is an indispensable aid to a deeper awareness of the world and its direction as a call to the student's faith and action. Skilled spiritual directors, trained in contemporary models of spiritual direction, are needed for our movement into the future.

Specialization. Each member of the Congregation is a precious gift whose richness of personality and human potential must be allowed to develop to the full. Diversification in the fulfilment of our common project seems to be a sign for the future. Is there not need for more flexibility and fresher approaches to the fostering of personal talents and gifts which are to be placed at the service of the Congregation in its carrying out of its mission?

Community with the laity and other religious. The major superiors of North America meeting in Puerto Rico this past January, reflecting on the Inter-American Conference of Major Superiors in

Chile, made the following statement: "We wish to draw special attention to the question of the liberation movement as it applies to women, and we propose that this topic receive attention at the various levels throughout the Congregation . . . With regard to formation programs, the specific aspect of the issue is to ensure the ability of our members to work with women as equals." In the new world we simply women as equals. must learn to enter with full enthusiasm into the great egalitarian movements of our time and bring to them the leaven of the Gospel. Surely our dreams for the future envisage Spiritans fully respecting the variety of vocations within the Church, in harmony and mutual respect collaborating for the building of God's Kingdom, ministering and missioning with Christians, men and women of other religious faiths, and all women and men of good will, willing to play a subordinate, supportive, anonymous role; and willing to learn how to serve from those we seek to serve. And surely this has implications for our formation communities.

Internationality. The Chapter saw internationality as the way into our future, but it left it up to all of us to translate this desire into programs and action.

First, we must clarify in dialogue the motives for internationality lest it become a slogan without content. We must deepen our understanding of the Gospel as the breaking down of all barriers of race, nation and culture. The new Foundations are signals of a new Spring within the Congregation, but, if we

do not learn to look at formation and indeed all reality through the eyes of our brothers in the Foundations, the promise of a new Spring will turn into division and polarization. A conversion is demanded – the same conversion of death to oneself in order to rise enriched by the beauty and dignity of the culture of the other.

Yet there is a subtle truth which we must not lose in our working towards internationality. Is it possible to be men without frontiers without being steeped in our own culture and without an intelligent direct concern for and insertion into the local Church of our origin. We must own our own culture in order to open ourselves to the culture of the other. There are two values to be balanced and integrated. But, in our journey towards the future, together we can and we must find a way of offering a variety of international experiences both to the formators and the students, to awaken and to foster an international spirit of openness and willingness to learn from the other. The quality of our missionary presence as well as the Gospel demands it. The future depends on it.

We have no wish to impose a uniform process of internationalization which will place all in the same mould, but we will offer opportunities, hopefully many opportunities, to respond to the desires of confreres both young and old, as well as to the demands of the Gospel, for the creation of a true community of brothers who are attentive to the subtle marks of the coming age and who discern the movement across frontiers as a sign of our times.

The role of the Generalate Team

In these early days of the present administration of the General Council we wish to encourage all those directly involved in the work of formation. We depend on you for our future. Together with you we will aggressively move toward that future with confidence.

We commit ourselves to the work of animation, coordination and communication for the unity of all, with deep respect for the rich variety of cultures which define who we are for the Church and for the coming world of tomorrow.

We commit ourselves to come to the aid of those Provinces and Foundations which are most in need, those who feel the Chapter did not go far enough with regard to internationalization, those who because of their situation feel abandoned, those who lack personnel for formation, those who fear the death of their Provinces. We call upon the entire Congregation to reach out to those in need in a spirit of international collaboration.

In a spirit of dialogue and knowing that we share with you the moments of doubt and blindness, we call the entire Congregation to a living hope in our

future. Yet a living hope requires as well that we exert all our energy and invest all our resources in an unknown future with the knowledge that formation today requires an extraordinary sensitivity to something new coming into existence.

The way ahead

One thing is clear: that we must all follow the way of the Gospel, the way of *kenosis*, the giving of self into the cycle of human problems – this being simply and profoundly the price of love. Formation for freedom is the only adequate response to the difficult and death-dealing situations of mission today, in which one may have to work without any visible success, standing up against injustice, and living side by side with the outcasts of society. Formation must prepare us for the forces which seek to diminish all who minister and mission in these in-between times. Perhaps the answer lies in the awareness that all has been given in Christ. If all is given, there is nothing to lose. If there is nothing to lose, there is nothing to fear.

THE GENERALATE TEAM

I/D 30

THE GENERALATE TEAM

January 1982

"Strengthen your brothers"

(Luke 22:32)

"Mission for the future" is a much discussed theme nowadays in most religious institutes. It was the theme of the SEDOS research seminar in March 1981 with 105 delegates from all parts of the world (cf. Spiritan News No. 36), and in November representatives of the various Generalates in Rome met to discuss the same subject. Our last General Chapter also devoted a good deal of attention to it.

As we prepare to share our reflection on this theme with you, the words of Scripture come spontaneously to mind: "Strengthen your brothers". Such is indeed our duty. "Strengthen your brothers", because new perspectives are opening up, revealing the beginning of a new age for Mission. "Strengthen your brothers" who "labour in the cause of the Gospel", for the service of a changing Mission is demanding, requires conversion and entails much uncertainty.

We take these words of Christ seriously, for they sum up the task you have asked us to do, to each one being given "the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7).

At the service of "the Church of God which is at . . . "

(1 Cor. 1:2)

The 1980 General Chapter asked for "a continuing commitment to our missionary involvement in the local Churches" (SL, 57-58). The growth of local Churches, which is so marked today, has been taking two main directions since Vatican II. One is towards UNITY – that of the Church of God gathered together in a single Body, by the same Spirit, with "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:4-6). The other is towards LOCALIZATION, for it is a question of "the Church of God which is at . . . ", in a particular human group with its own cultural, social, economic and po-

litical context. Missionary service too must take these two directions (cf. *Lum. Gent.*, 23; *Evang. Nunt.*, 61-62).

The issue is an important one: you are playing your part, however modest, in the communion of Churches; you are contributing to the development of the Church, one and multiform, rich with the diversity of peoples and cultures, completing the mystery "of the Word made flesh"; you are participating in the growth of local Churches which together join in the

universal Mission. Missionary activity is gradually moving towards the new era of the Church and her Mission.

The "localization" of Churches

The "localization" of a Church, i.e. an original way of experiencing the mystery of Christ in a human group, extends to all spheres of the life and mission of this Church. Among its many aspects we may pick out the following:

- Communion. The Church of Christ becomes local, not only by the establishment of the hierarchy, but when the peoples of a certain cultural and geographical area base their solidarity and their already existing links on the foundation of the word of Christ and the presence of the Spirit (cf. the new relations in Matt. chaps. 5-7 and 18; and in Mark 9:30-10:45).
- Ministries. The early Christian communities showed a great variety of charisms and ministries, and the same Spirit who manifested His presence in so many different ways is at work in the Churches today. This conviction helps us to recognize the charisms present in people, to be open to new ministries and to develop coresponsibility at all levels (cf. 1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:7-11).
- Inculturation and liberation. Inculturation means the incarnation of the mystery of the Word in a particular culture, which it both assumes and purifies. It means a new discovery of the Gospel and a further step by the Church towards universality. Liberation, which is inseparable from inculturation and complements it, expresses the strength of the Gospel, which liberates from every oppressive structure, from every violation of fundamental human rights, to "restore all" in the justice and peace of Christ (cf. Gaudium et Spes, 44 and 57-62; Evang. Nunt., 20 and 27-39).
- Basic communities. These communities, which are becoming more and more common in all Churches, are a particularly effective form of "localization". They offer a minimum of structure and a maximum of communion and communication. They favour the development of ministries, the exercise of coresponsibility, ongoing dialogue, and the struggle for liberation (cf. Evang. Nunt., 58).

The Spiritan: a "religious-missionary"

You work for the growth of the Churches and their "localization" by collaborating with other apostolic workers and the whole Christian community in a spirit of diversity and complementarity. To be engaged "with others" in a common task, under the responsibility of the local Church, will be an important aspect of future missionary activity.

What are the particular traits of the religious-missionary Spiritan's service to a Church? The search for a service that is specific to us, for reserved areas or commitments, is doomed to failure. Missionary institutes must recognize that the local Church is responsible for all the apostolic work and is coresponsible, with other Churches, for the universal Mission. This responsibility, which can only grow greater as time goes on, will oblige the institutes to "re-situate" themselves. What is specific to each institute will be certain traits in its life and action that are recognized by its members as forming a common bond and spirit.

More concretely, we may single out some aspects of Spiritan presence in the Churches:

- Like the local Churches, the different Spiritan circumscriptions themselves experience a "localization" in accordance with the concrete circumstances of the country, people and Churches. **District Chapters**, which are held more and more in dialogue with the local Church, are essential. Spiritans will probably diversify still more in future, and this will be a good thing.
- Our global aim is to contribute to the development of Churches until they are self-sufficient. Gradually Churches arrive at a stage of maturity where they no longer need a massive missionary presence. We must be able to discern the criteria of maturity, taking into account the Church itself and our own finalities. Mobility in commitments will impose itself more and more on the Congregation.
- We strongly encourage mobility of commitments in the circumscriptions, going from the centre towards frontier situations a movement that is becoming one of our major concerns. Districts like Kenya, Cameroon and Senegal have moved towards zones of first evangelization. Provinces like England, France and the United States are working for migrants and abandoned minorities. "A deepening commitment towards the poor" (SL, 59-60) was one of the great priorities of the 1980 General Chapter. This movement from the centre towards frontier situations is becoming a "leitmotiv" of our animation. The Congregation must revive its original ideal.
- We must help the Churches to become more missionary, as local Churches and still more as sharing in the universal Mission (SL, 58). A new missionary drive will thus be developed. Stress on basic communities and on our Spiritan Foundations can be of great assistance here.
- The Churches need the witness of religious life (SL, 61) and in particular of **community life**. While respecting the demands of the ministry and the personal needs of confreres, there should be a move from too great dispersion to real community life. At the Enlarged Council next May, a survey will be presented on community life, in our own Congregation and in others.

"The care of all the Churches" (2 Cor. 11:28)

At the service of communion between Churches

The development of local Churches, incarnating themselves in different cultures and situations, requires ever deeper communion between Churches to ensure both their growth and their unity. Missionary institutes, because of their internationality and their presence in so many Churches, can play a leading role in this. They can act as channels for communicating the original and complementary "words" that the Churches have to say to each other; they bear witness to the universality of the one Church of Christ and they too have the "care of all the Churches".

This role of exchange and communion, important for Mission today, will be still more so tomorrow. Churches in all continents will make their own specific contributions to Mission. Among the four main missionary activities picked out by the recent SEDOS meeting, the influence of Asia was stressed for dialogue, of Africa for inculturation, and of Latin America for liberation; proclamation is common to all. Missionary congregations have their part to play in all four.

The service of exchange and communion will thus take on more and more importance for the missionary, and his activity will have to develop in this direction. The presence of representatives of other Churches is desirable, even if the local Church is self-sufficient, as has often been pointed out. It is easy to guess the demands of this service: the missionary should be rich with the experience of his Church of origin and also with that of other Churches; and he should be open to the main currents of thought in the Church today. Refresher courses, ongoing formation and theological reading are necessary, and the "rotation" of personnel can help in the updating process.

The implications and possibilities of this service must be explored, but already exchange and communion between members of the Congregation and between Provinces, Districts and Foundations can be recommended. In our meetings, such as those of Major Superiors and Chapters, we should stress the inter-ecclesial dimension. We should pay special attention too to the North-South dialogue. We should make use of home leave, the mass media and meetings to tell of the "wonderful deeds" that God is working in the Churches.

At the service of coresponsible Churches

No Church should turn in on itself. Each local Church is also coresponsible, along with the others, for the universal mission. Religious Congregations

place themselves at the service of this coresponsibility. While sharing in a Church's local evangelization, the missionary should remain open to the universal Mission. Mobility and taking root locally are two expressions of one and the same fidelity to both the Congregation and the local Church.

The missionary solidarity of Churches expresses itself in their solidarity on the level of personnel. Some Churches are rich in personnel, others poor. Churches grow towards maturity at different speeds; fields of apostolate evolve; new missionary situations present themselves. Congregations can play an important role in this solidarity at the level of personnel, taking care to go rather towards poor and abandoned Churches and to respond to urgent missionary situations wherever they may be. Personnel will always be needed for frontier situations. To engage more easily in this service of coresponsibility, the Congregation must reassess its commitments and clarify its priorities. It would be good too if Congregations went about this reassessment in dialogue with each other and with local Churches.

One of the advantages of coresponsibility is that it will help both the younger and older Churches to become more missionary. Special attention should be paid here to the Southern Hemisphere, as Pope John Paul II did on Mission Sunday 1981: "A phenomenon that gladdens us and for which we must thank the Lord is the birth of a missionary movement in the young Churches which, from being evangelized, are becoming evangelizers... The young Churches which, in their turn, have become missionary, are giving proof of maturity in the faith. They have realized that a local Chuch that is not missionary is not fully Catholic" (18 Oct. 1981).

It is an important development: the young Churches throughout the world, together with the older ones, will collegially share the task of evangelization, both locally and in the universal Mission. Missionaries and their points of origin are multiplying and diversifying.

It is in this context that we must see our young Provinces and Foundations in the Southern Hemisphere and missionary animation in the Northern. Among the priorities drawn up by the 1980 Chapter were "promoting new Spiritan Foundations" and "promoting a missionary spirit in the local Churches" (SL, 58). We ask all confreres, then, to move in the direction that Mission is taking today: the young Provinces and Foundations are the business of each Spiritan and not merely of the Congregation in general (cf. SL, 104-138).

Another point to be noted is the growing diversification of the Congregation's membership. Africans form the largest group of young Spiritans at the moment. For us too there are new mission-sending circumscriptions. And it is fitting that, at least until they find their full identity, the young Provinces and Foundations should have their own mission areas. We are working on providing them with these

"Go out to the whole world" (Mk 16:15)

These well-known words of Christ take on new urgency today, and some confreres may be a bit uneasy at the thought of the Congregation opening up to all continents. The 1980 Chapter recommended "greater openness to the call to universal Mission" (SL, 56), and, in line with this, the General Council has decided to promote "greater openness to the world - to the whole world".

Mission today is multidirectional: "from everywhere to everywhere". The distinction between 'sending' Churches and 'receiving' Churches is dying out, and the missionary movement developing in the Southern Hemisphere is opening up new paths for the future. The calls and challenges of today's world (cf. I/D No. 25) invite religious Congregations to "move out and encounter humanity in its struggles and diversity" (SEDOS Seminar).

A danger for missionary institutes is that they may remain fixed in an outdated notion of mission, grow old in their present commitments, refuse to face up to today's challenges, and be overtaken by events.

The General Council has adopted a policy of promoting movement from the centre towards frontier situations. It may express itself only in token foundations, but, taken together, they are a significant move.

The poor must always be a priority for us. Poverty is on the increase throughout the world, and the SEDOS Seminar pointed out "the widespread, even global character of oppression". Our care for the poor should go first of all towards those who are suffering from injustice and whose fundamental human rights have been trampled upon. We must become actively involved in work for Justice and Peace.

Each circumscription, if it has not already done so, should undertake this movement towards frontier situations: first evangelization, abandoned or op-

pressed minorities, marginalized urban groups, refugees (especially in Africa), migrants, dialogue with Islam, non-evangelized milieus, involvement in contemporary problems such as unemployment, racism and violence.

At the level of the Congregation as a whole, there will have to be greater mobility. Some of the 1980 Chapter decisions have not been too welcome to all the confreres. It is true that our numbers are going down, but we must also look to the future. The evolution of Mission and various calls on us require diversification and greater efforts to ensure the Congregation's vitality and its ability to adapt to the future. We are considering the needs of Asia, and of India in particular. It is clear that Asia is the greatest missionary challenge today, and new approaches are needed. We are also looking at requests from Latin American countries. The movement is towards greater 'universality' in the Congregation.

Our Brothers have an important part to play in the renewal of our missionary activity. As consecrated laymen, they can, in their professional work, "encounter humanity in its struggles and diversity". They can more easily enter non-evangelized milieus and be witnesses to the Gospel where priests may not be allowed to work. For the renewal of our Brothers we shall have to go further than the 1980 Chapter did. The unanimous approval, without discussion, of SL 97-100 was felt by several, both Fathers and Brothers, as lack of interest rather than the opposite.

It is through contact with the unevangelized that the importance of Mission is brought home to us. On the occasion of his meeting with the centurion, Jesus saw his good will and made it clear that Mission would have no bounds: "Many will come from east and west to take their places at the feast" (Mt 8:10-11).

THE GENERALATE TEAM

"In each diocese the bishop should strive to understand what the Spirit wants to manifest, through his flock and especially through the religious present in the diocese. That is why it is necessary for him to cultivate sincere and familiar relations with superiors, in order the better to fulfil his ministry of Shepherd towards men and women religious. In fact, it is his specific office to defend consecrated life, to foster and animate the fidelity and authenticity of religious and to help them become part of the communion and of the evangelizing action of his Church, according to their distinctive nature...

Religious, on the other hand, should consider the bishop not only as Shepherd of the entire diocesan community, but also as the one who guarantees fidelity to their vocation as they carry out their service for the good of the local Church. Indeed they should comply promptly and faithfully with the requests or desires of the bishops when they are asked to undertake a greater share in the ministry of salvation, due consideration being given to the character of the particular institute and to its constitutions" (*Mutuae Relationes*, 1978, no. 52).

I/D 31

THE GENERALATE TEAM

February 1982

Towards the new Constitutions

Most of the replies to the questionnaire on the revision of the Constitutions have now arrived, and they are being sorted, studied and synthesized by a special group, to facilitate the work of the Constitutions Committee, which will prepare a report during the month of March for presentation to the Enlarged General Council. The EGC will study the report at its meeting at Carcavelos in May and will appoint a committee for the writing of the first draft of the Constitutions.

A glance at the replies that have arrived reveals that there has been a fairly high level of abstention. During our recent visits we have seen and heard some of the reasons for this: overwork and lack of time; doubts as to the necessity or usefulness of Constitutions (is it possible to "fix" something in a world of

perpetual change?); doubts as to whether this is the right time for it (is it not too soon to take definitive decisions?); priority given to real-life situations rather than to theory; lack of interest in juridical and legalistic questions; tiredness and lack of energy in some Provinces and communities. Perhaps the main reason is that a lot of energy was put into the replies to the questionnaire for the General Chapter two years ago and that many felt they had already expressed their views sufficiently.

However, before taking up the second stage of the process, it would seem worthwhile to draw attention to the implications of this challenge that the Vatican Council has given us, with consequences that could be decisive for the future of the Congregation.

The time has come

On 14 November 1979, addressing 600 Women Superiors General in the Sistine Chapel, during the fifth General Assembly of the UISG, Pope John Paul II said:

"After several years of experiments with a view to updating religious life in accordance with the spirit of each institute, the time has come to evaluate these efforts objectively and humbly so as to bring out the positive elements, set aside any deviations there may have been, and prepare a stable Rule of life, approved by the Church and providing the Sisters with a stimulus for a deeper knowledge of their commitments and a life of joyful fidelity".

It is our task now to try to define the characteristic traits of our Congregation in the post-Varican II

Church. It is not the first time that the Congregation has had to redefine itself: about every twenty years since the death of Libermann there has been a revision of the Constitutions. The Venerable Father himself foresaw such a process when he drew up the Provisional Rule: "I am not trying to draw up a complete and final Rule, but to give an impulse and establish the true spirit of the work. Changes will be made later on, in the light of experience" (Letter to Dom Salier, N.D. II, 154).

The last revision of our Constitutions goes back to 1957. Since then there has been Vatican II, changes in the concept of mission, the rediscovery of our Founders, the new Foundations in the Southern Hemisphere, and the new awareness of universality, subsidiarity, coresponsibility, dialogue with the world,

local Churches, Justice and Peace... All of this has broken former moulds and requires a 'second conversion' on our part.

Our whole religious life, in its spirit and organization, is geared to mission: the proclamation of the Kingdom and service of the poor. As in the past, but in a new way, we can say: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to proclaim liberation, healing, salvation, the Good News". To us also it is said: "Go and tell John the Baptist what you have seen and heard: the blind see..." Our new Constitutions must be at the service of this concept of apostolate, evangelization, mission. They must stir us to a quality of life, a true

witness, that responds to the demands of our ministry. They must help us to understand it better, to live it more completely and to organize it more efficiently. The revision of the Constitutions will be the result of our understanding of what we are. They will bear witness to our insights into the faith, in contact with this Church and world that are no longer the Church and world of even a few years ago.

What then are our sources of inspiration? What are the basic values that will influence our future? What are the priorities that will call to us? In a word, what is 'God's today' for the Congregation?

Our identity card

Our Constitutions are a sort of identity card of the Congregation. Rather than a collection of norms and a rule of conduct, they should express what is best in us, what the love of God has placed in our hearts, his dream for each of us, the joy of the gift of ourselves, understood and accepted by us, our dedication without reserve to the cause of the most abandoned. They should tell a story, our story, lived by thousands of confreres since the beginning of the Congregation. They should be a storehouse of our riches, expressing the best of what all Spiritans have lived and contributed to the service of the Kingdom. It is from this past heritage that we get our inspiration for today.

past heritage that we get our inspiration for today.

Whether we think of the 1734 Rule or Libermann's Provisional Rule, texts have always been first

of all the expression of a lived faith-experience before being written down. Every Rule is basically a biography and remains alive only if based on biographies. It is because it is this special kind of book that the revision of our Constitutions is a challenge to us. The biggest difficulty to be faced is not one of vocabulary but one of content.

When a Congregation is faithful to its charism and meets in a General Chapter to express in today's terms what it believes and what it lives, it is not difficult for it to find the words. The sad thing would be if confreres had nothing to say about their life.

Have we not much that we can say to the world today from the experiences we have lived?

Our letter of recommendation

When St. Paul wished to present his credentials to the Corinthians as an Apostle, he referred only to the living community that he had founded: "You yourselves are my letter of recommendation..., which anybody can see and read" (2 Cor. 3:2). Is it not the same for ourselves? To revise our Constitutions means to take stock of our lives. The faith-experience of each confrere, the life of faith of each community, must be the first 'constitutional' value for any institute. Our Constitutions are, in the words of St. Paul, "a letter written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on the tablets of your living hearts" (2 Cor. 3:3).

The revision of our Constitutions should be a sort of Pentecostal period, in which the whole Congregation will assemble in the Upper Room and allow itself to be 'invaded' by the Holy Spirit. It is from Him that the first word on the revision should come. Certainly

there must be discussion and consensus, but in a sense the Constitutions precede our consensus: the Spirit should be there before us. Our reflection and our study are only to try to discern together what the Spirit has already written in the heart of each one.

St. Paul goes still further and stresses the witness value of this 'constitutional letter': it is not in the first place something individual; still less is it a work of experts or of an editorial committee; there is something in it that only a community can give, and only a living community experience can give life to the texts. Without this experience, neither the Church's approbation nor the most careful editorial work will be able to make us credible and give value to our message. Without his 'letter of recommendation', St. Paul himself would have felt like an intruder in the apostolate.

A task for all to share in

Called as we are to live Christ's life in community, it is in community that we must revise our Constitutions. Some seem to be suspicious of the text in advance, fearing that it will not bring out sufficiently the deep paschal experience, the leng discernment

that preceded the writing of the original Rule. But are we lacking in prophets? Is it not possible for our new Constitutions to be a living witness of faith rather than the fruit of analytical study and legalism?

- The revision of the Constitutions should be first of all the expression of the love of each one of us for the Church and the Congregation. It must be a renewal of 'life', and love is the only force capable of generating new life. There can be no Rule which is not the fruit of great love. There is a special 'grace for the revision of Constitutions' and in practice, for each of us, this means seeing how we stand in our love for the Congregation.
- Each of us should play his part in the revision. This does not mean that each of us should be on the committee! There has to be a special group appointed to try to express the feelings and insights of the others, but we should each have the opportunity to make our views known. It is a task to be done TOGETHER.
- A third important point is that it should be a work, not of 'experts', but of really committed people. A deep knowledge of the Congregation is necessary its history, its original inspiration, its mission in the Church, its tradition. It can only be done by those of the family. Others may be able to help experts in canon law or in the theology of the religious life but the basic work must be done by members whose hearts are committed to the Congregation, with the intuition and sensitivity that only members can have.

- Another requirement is the state of conversion. Without it, how will the Holy Spirit be able to do his work? We must be completely open to the Lord and his demands. Only "the pure of heart will see God", who "gives his grace to the humble and resists the proud".
- A final requirement is unity and family spirit. A divided Congregation would not be capable of the work, and the Holy Spirit is not present where there is discord. An atmosphere of confrontation and conflict would make it impossible to see things clearly in God.

But we must be fully conscious that we live our unity not only in diversity but in the midst of real and painful divisions that affect the Church as a whole and that we are not in a position to heal. They form part of the cross that we must carry.

The Constitutions will remind us that the ideal that we share lies beyond these divisions, at the end of a road that is still not clear. They will help us to hold out our hand to each other in brotherly love and to esteem each other in spite of differences, because we remain brothers and we all wish to work for God's Kingdom.

A Rule of Life

The first aim of any revision of Constitutions is always a return to the Sermon on the Mount, a reawakening to the primacy of the Gospel. And having the Gospel as our basic inspiration means proposing a program of radical options that will affect our lives. Vague, lukewarm Constitutions that "empty the cross of Christ" would be useless. The new Constitutions, like the old, should not hesitate to speak of a hard road and a narrow door, a cross to be taken up every day, long periods of prayer, the renunciation of material possessions, the suppression of useless expense and costly clothing.

At the same time, Constitutions that are drawn up in the spirit of the Gospel should have all the human and divine warmth of Christ; they cannot be juridical documents, imposing a law or a sabbath that would take precedence over persons.

Renewed Constitutions will tell us to stop when we meet a widow of Nain and to weep when our friend Lazarus dies; they will give us the heart of St. Paul to call our brothers "beloved", as he did the Christians of Rome.

Renewed Constitutions will teach us to leave ninety-nine persons who are safe to go in search of the one that is lost; they will shake us out of the comfortable circle into which we so often close ourselves and open us to the problems of the Church and the world. We must be prepared for the new Constitutions to drag us out of ourselves.

In a course that he gave on the question, Fr. Dortel-Claudot reproached Congregations that would tailor the demands of their Constitutions to the needs of confreres who, in spite of good will, are content with a minimum: so as not to upset them, the Constitutions are brought down to their level. A Rule should state clearly the ideal to be lived. Human weakness will see to it that we do not always live up to the ideal, but let us humbly accept that the Rule should challenge us and shake us out of our laziness.

May our new Constitutions clear the air of our communities and help us to breathe the Gospel!

A source of identity

"Given the importance of Constitutions for the identity, development and unity of a Congregation, it is not good to remain too long with provisional texts... The time of revising should not be prolonged unnecessarily. Twelve years should normally be sufficient. On the other hand, the task is a demanding one, requiring an experience of life before codification... It should also be remembered that

the full understanding of one's charism requires time, both for it to become really part of oneself and for seeing all its implications... There can be sound reasons, therefore, why an Institute that has seriously worked at the revision of its Constitutions might not be able to have its text ready for the second ordinary Chapter'.

This was the reply of Sister Mary Linscott, of the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for Religious, to some Congregations of Women that had expressed uneasiness at the prospect of a deadline for having their Constitutions ready.

It reminds us that it is not good to remain too long in a state of experimentation on questions that concern the Congregation's backbone: we would be in danger of losing our uprightness and internal cohesion.

It is our Constitutions that rally us around a clear and unambiguous Common Project, without confreres

going off to 'do their own thing'. They protect us from pressures of various kinds, both within the Church and from outside.

They are our identity card and at the same time the guarantee and source of this identity. Those who wrote our original Rules and Constitutions (Poullart des Places, Bouic, and Libermann during the year 1840 that he spent in Rome) took all the time needed to ensure that they would express our identity, and this heritage is a precious one that we should not cast aside but enrich with the experience gained since then.

New vitality

It is in the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* of the Second Vatican Council that all religious institutes were asked to revise their Constitutions in the light of the Council. It is clear from the Decree that what is aimed at is less the revision of the texts themselves than the renewal and adaptation of religious life in all its aspects. In other words, what is important is not new Constitutions but new vitality. The revision of the texts is merely the consequence, the expression, of the changes in religious life – changes that move in two directions: back towards the sources and out towards the world, the return to the essential and the return to the real. In biblical terms one would speak of 'conversion' and of 'signs of the times'.

- The first principle given in *Perfectae Caritatis* for the revision of Constitutions concerns their faithfulness to the Gospel. Shall we return to a radically Christian life or shall we remain on the periphery? Will our Constitutions be firmly rooted in the Gospel or have only a vague connection with it? Will they contain really evangelical values or merely juridical norms? There is, it is true, a ''letter that kills'', but there is also a letter that inspires and is a source of life.
- The second principle concerns fidelity to the charism of the Congregation. To what extent will they be "the Gospel according to Poullart or Libermann"? Will the lives of our Founders and their faith experiences be the light that illuminates our texts? Will they provide the impulsion that will set us on course again? Constitutions cut off from their Founder would be like a fruit cut off from its tree, or like a tree that has been uprooted. The primitive Rule of St.

Francis, which is considered the Rule that is closest to the Gospel, was not the Gospel according to Mark or Luke but "the Gospel according to the intuition of St. Francis". The Founder's life is the book or the place in which God has chosen to reveal his intentions for each of us. And renewed Constitutions will have all the more impact if they succeed in transmitting in all their vigour the dreams and ideals of the Founders.

• The third principle given in *Perfectae Caritatis* is that Constitutions should be in tune with the needs of the present age. They should not be the echo of a past period of history but should rather look towards the future. When a Founder writes his original Rule, he writes it for the age in which he lives, but in the years preceding Vatican II much had changed in the world while the structures of religious life were becoming out-of-date and its language was no longer the language of the times. If there were defections from religious life after the Council, the fault is not to be sought in the Council but rather in the religious life that had preceded it. With changes in its prestige and social role, flaws in its evangelical vitality were quickly revealed.

Shall we be able to a find the true sources of our own vitality, and the language in which to express them for today? Our Constitutions are not meant to speak to the world at large, but may they at least speak to us and to the hearts of young men today and tomorrow.

THE GENERALATE TEAM.

"We agreed that a Provisional Rule should be written from the start, before the missionaries left, even though it would take several years of experience before it could be definitely fixed. The reason is that if the missionaries go out to different countries and get absorbed in their activities without some sort of Rule in their hands, it will be almost impossible for the work to develop" (Libermann, Letter to Dom Salier, N.D. II, 153).

"In any society there must be a rule. Look at the world around us: there isn't the smallest gathering of people with a common purpose, not even, for instance, a stagecoach office, that hasn't got its rules, for without them individuals would act on their own, there would be no unity and

therefore no society" (Libermann, Provisional Rule, Gloss, p. 59).

I/D 32

THE GENERALATE TEAM

October 1982

"Take Courage"

The Enlarged General Council that was held at Carcavelos in May this year was a good reflection of the "Spiritan reality" as described by the 1980 General Chapter in the section on 'Mission Today': "Our Congregation today shows signs of suffering and signs of hope" (SL, 26-46). At the Enlarged Councils of 1976 and 1978 it was the signs of hope that prevailed; at the 1982 Council it was rather the signs of suffering.

However, this Council seems just as important to us as the preceding ones, not so much because of new decisions taken as because of the questions raised. These questions must be faced and answered if our renewal is to be realistic and our hope in the future well founded.

"Signs of suffering"

"Present changes bring about difficulties and tensions" (SL, 27 ff.), and these did in fact emerge at the Carcavelos Enlarged Council:

- In the field of priorities, tension was felt between the priorities of circumscriptions and those of the Congregation as a whole. Did we not often hear the questions: "Why take on new commitments when our present ones are already suffering from lack of personnel? And what are the criteria on which these new commitments are based?"
- Internationality is still a problem in formation and in the setting up of international teams. What do we mean by internationality and why should we stress it? Are we paying enough attention to the need for solid grounding in one's own culture and for the presence of a substantial group of young students in the home Province?
- On the plan for the new Constitutions, discussion centred on the relationship between the apostolate and religious consecration. Different ways of looking at this relationship mean different approaches to the order in which they should be treated in the Constitu

tions: should apostolate come first, or consecration? The tension at the heart of the description of the Spiritan as a 'religious-missionary' was thus clearly felt.

- As at the 1978 Enlarged Council and the 1980 General Chapter, community renewal was seen as a difficult question: cultural differences, long-standing habits and 'de facto' situations seem to stand in the way of renewal.
- The report on New Forms of Collaboration presented interesting experiments, but did not enable the meeting to give directives for further progress in this field. Difficulties in the way of true membership in the Congregation were raised because of its clerical status, material problems and mentalities that were not open to change.
- On the question of the general government of the Congregation, and the way it will be defined in the Constitutions, fears of too much centralization were expressed. Stress was laid rather on decentralization and on the responsibility of the circumscriptions and the regional conferences of Major Superiors.

"Signs of hope"

Though there were signs of suffering, there were also signs of hope that were clearly evident at the Enlarged Council: in the exceptional hospitality of our Portuguese confreres, the fraternal spirit of the participants, the quality of the liturgy, the informal meetings in which many questions were settled and many diverging viewpoints brought closer together. . .

The short reports on Angola, Paraguay, Pakistan, Nigeria-East and the various Foundations were stimulating, and they brought out the real vitality of the Congregation.

No important decisions were taken by the meeting, but we are sure that the following reflections and suggestions based on it will be also, in their own way seeds of hope

"Bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2)

"It is wonderful to belong to a Congregation; you can count on others, you are not alone," said one of the young confreres in Pakistan when, together, we were working out on the spot the future of Spiritan presence in that country.

Urgent situations

The Enlarged Council was first of all an experience: that of belonging to a large group of brothers who, together, are engaged in a common adventure. The most needy, in personnel or in finances, can appeal for help to the others. Thus a few urgent situations revealed themselves at Carcavelos:

- In the Prefecture Apostolic of Tambacounda, Senegal, there are tribes that are now showing openness to the Gospel, but workers are needed. "It is an opportunity not to be missed", said the Principal Superior. A team of three would be necessary.
- In **Guinea-Bissau**, where there is a particularly difficult situation of first evangelization, it would be necessary to have at least two teams. Two or three confreres would be welcome immediately.
- In Zaïre, the District of Kongolo, which has been so severely tried, is in need of personnel. Lack of personnel has not stopped the District from drawing up the 'Kabongo project' for a region that has been neglected till now but that should see considerable development.
- In Mauritius, our confreres have mentioned three priorities: the parish of Fr. Laval, the Indian Ocean Foundation, and the Rose Hill catechetical and youth centre. For the last named work, run by the Principal Superior himself, one or two confreres would be needed, because of its importance to the local Church in its youth programs and also because of its importance to the Foundation.
- Begun in 1971 by the Province of U.S.A. West, the mission of Mexico has eight confreres in six parishes, each of which has several Indian communities. The Mexican Indian has been called "the poorest of the poor". Our confreres live in a precarious situation here and their ministry is difficult. Their main priority the training of local leaders, catechists and priests faces problems inherent in the situation of the Indians, and they have appealed for help. The confreres, who now come from several Provinces, are asking to be recognized as an International Group.
- There are more than 25 million refugees in the world, 6.3 million of whom are in Africa. "The fact that millions of men, women and children live precariously in overcrowded refugee camps is a human tragedy of enormous proportions. It is also a human-rights tragedy" (Joan Baez). As the Congregation has made Justice and Peace one of its priorities, it must try to do comething for refugees.

The three 1976 priorities

Six years ago, the 1976 Enlarged General Council recognized three priorities: Angola, Paraguay and Pakistan; and we must still recognize these as priorities of the Congregation as a whole. We will give more complete information on them later on, but already we can refer you back to I/D No. 7 ('Enlarged Council — Solidarity'), I/D No 11 ('New Paths for the Congregation?') and I/D No. 18 ('Spiritan Life and Spiritan Mission — the 1978 EGC'). You will find in them the context and the reasoning behind these priorities.

ANGOLA: Here we have a Church and a Spiritan group that are suffering from political events and from a serious diminution of personnel. "It would be necessary to have lived through a similar experience in order to grasp the intensity of the appeal coming from it," remarked a General Assistant. A Congregation that specializes in 'difficult situations' should help its members in their time of trial.

PARAGUAY: The alternative in 1976 was either to give up this mission or to commit ourselves seriously to it, and the Enlarged Council that year decided on commitment, out of solidarity with the poor, fidelity to the local Church, the importance of Latin America, and the need to diversify and renew the Congregation. Here too we should have three or four teams, and for this we must add three or four confreres to the present international team.

PAKISTAN: As a result of repeated appeals from the Bishops of Pakistan and the S.C. for Evangelization, the 1976 EGC decided to commit itself here. The 'tribals' meet all the demands of our criteria: first evangelization, the 'poor and abandoned', the marginalized and oppressed. In addition there is dialogue with Islam and other religions, the importance of Asia, "where the future of Mission is being decided", and new developments in the apostolate which require diversity of commitment on the part of the Congregation (cf. I/D No. 25, 'The Things to Come', and I/D No. 30, 'Strengthen your Brothers'). The project drawn up in dialogue between the Bishops, our confreres and the Generalate Team should be realized by 1985-86: six more confreres are required, to make up four teams of three.

Financial solidarity

Like the collection that St. Paul organized in Asia Minor, the sign that we belong to a single community is the willingness to share material goods. This willingness exists in the Congregation, and we hope that it will continue to grow: many confreres experience real need, especially those who live and work among the poor. The remarkable growth of our Province of Nigeria-East, the development of the new Foundations and the needs of our Province of Poland require special attention.

All these appeals should be studied at the meetings of Major Superiors, especially the question of aid to the young Provinces and Foundations.

Towards the future

One could object: "Why listen to so many new appeals? We are already short of personnel in our own circumscriptions. We have so many important and interesting works of our own." These remarks are obviously valid. And yet, if we are to enter fully into the new missionary era, we cannot afford not to listen to these appeals.

Global orientation

The 1980 General Chapter set its face firmly towards the future, and, after the Chapter, the Generalate Team took the same direction, both from conviction and from fidelity to the Chapter's mandate. Our global orientation could be summed up as follows:

"Taking into account:

the will of the Chapter, which resolutely faced the

future with hope and realism,

and the new challenges of the world, the Church, the Congregation and Mission, which are all caught up in a period of transition to a 'new era',

the Generalate Team:

recognizes as the basis of its animation the tasks and priorities given by the 1980 Chapter and expressed above all in the 'Orientations and Priorities' of 'Mission Today', SL, 55-61; carries out its animation in the present concrete cir-

carries out its animation in the present concrete circumstances, while coordinating tasks and priorities in such a way as to ensure a definite movement to-

wards the future;

gives particular attention, in this context, to Justice and Peace, the new Foundations, formation and community renewal;

and engages in Planning and in the assessment of our commitments as indispensable conditions for the realization of this Common Project."

We believe that the new appeals contribute to this global movement — "a movement towards the periphery, towards frontier situations".

The objectives

In this general framework of the Chapter's 'Orientations and Priorities', some very precise motivations guide us in our choices. With the passage of time, all institutes grow old in their commitments and fall away from their ideal. There is constant need for the Congregation to rejuvenate itself, especially in these times of falling numbers. Our first criteria are our tra-

ditional ones: "the poor and abandoned", "difficult situations", "works for which it is difficult to find personnel".

The "movement towards the periphery" results from the growth of the Churches in which we work. One by one they are reaching maturity and, unless we want "to end with the end of the missions", we must turn ourselves towards the more abandoned, in our own circumscription or in other Churches. And for this, an assessment of our present commitments is imperative.

A missionary Congregation has to respond to the missionary challenges of the day if it is to maintain its credibility. The commitments of the past must be confronted with the calls of the present: from the poor who suffer injustice and have their human rights spurned, from neglected minorities, from the victims of racism, from the refugees and migrants...

The Congregation must be attentive to the new directions of Mission: mission towards all the continents, mission from everywhere to everywhere, mission from the Third World, mission as exchange and sharing between Churches, the participation of the laity, new Provinces and Foundations, new forms of membership (cf. I/D No. 25, 'The Things to Come').

Let us go elsewhere. . . $^{\prime\prime}$ (Mk 1 : 38, Lk 4 : 42-44)

When "the crowds wanted to prevent Jesus from leaving them" (Lk 4:42), he said: "Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring towns, so that I may preach there too, for that is why I have come" (Mk 1:38). The crowds that want to keep us are many, and there are such good reasons for staying. They bar the way to our renewal and our acceptance of new challenges, in the name of fidelity to the local Church, a work to be maintained, lack of personnel, inculturation, difficulties in changing etc. And little by little we realize that an institute can die in all good faith, and become incapable of facing up to the needs of the present. "Elsewhere," said our Superior General at the Enlarged General Council, "there may be more urgent situations than those in the circumscription or the work in which we are involved, and these should be heeded." Pakistan, which is practically the only new commitment "elsewhere" in the last few years, is little compared to what other institutes are We strongly encourage those circumscriptions that feel themselves drawn to 'frontier situations'.

"New wineskins for new wine"

If we cannot rise above the old perspectives of "a Province and its Districts", distribution of personnel according to language and culture, the horizon of our own circumscription, the desire to remain faithful to the local community in a mission that is drawing to a close, then there is no hope for "the poorest of the poor" in Mexico and Pakistan, the abandoned people in the Kabongo region and Guinea Bissou, the tribes in

Tambacounda that are ready to welcome the Gospel, our confreres who are so severely tried in Angola, and the three priorities mentioned above in Mauritius.

Internationality, coresponsibility, planning, new forms of collaboration and community renewal must all be considered as requirements of the present time

Crossing frontiers: internationality

As it seems to be still not very well understood, internationality will be discussed in a coming number of I/D. The confreres who presented their appeals at the EGC certainly believe in it; for them the important thing is that we should respond to urgent missionary situations. Traditional structures and the real values to be found in groups of a single culture are of secondary importance.

Present-day developments would seem to indicate that it will be normal in future to live and work in some sort of inter-cultural situation. National Spiritan blocs are dissolving and will continue to dissolve; the young Churches are continuing to grow and to diversify their apostolic workers; intercultural Spiritan groups are on the increase; the young Provinces and Foundations, which are already cutting across many Districts, will take their place, and rightly so, and this cannot be done without new forms of internationality. No doubt, the majority of confreres will hardly be affected by internationality, but for those in formation it is a way towards the future. Valuable suggestions were made at the EGC for promoting internationality while at the same time safeguarding the values of cultural identity.

"At the service of each other" (1 Pet. 4:10): coresponsibility

To be able to respond to appeals and to face the future with confidence, coresponsibility must be strengthened at all levels: community, circumscription, conferences of Major Superiors, and between the Generalate Team and the Major Superiors.

Sharing, solidarity, mutual service and coresponsibility should replace the problem of centralization or decentralization (a real problem ten years ago) and that of the distribution of power. A more evangelical approach to authority is being seen in religious institutes, with all members bearing their share of responsibility. The EGC encouraged confreres in this direction.

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7): Planning

One of our confreres who is a specialist in Planning said: "What we want to do, with modern techniques, is basically what St. Paul spoke about when he described the role of the different members in the body." 'Research and Planning' means making better use of our resources in money and personnel, and

facing up to the many challenges mentioned in these pages. Planning must be done at all levels, and the Generalate Team will provide information and coordination, and plan for the Congregation as a whole.

New forms of collaboration

The laity will certainly play an increasingly important missionary role in future, and we must learn to work with them and give them their rightful place. Several of them have expressed a desire to be more closely associated with the life and work of the Congregation.

The report presented to the EGC mentioned various experiments taking place, though these are mostly still at the stage of a loose form of association. True membership comes up against the clerical status of the Congregation, financial problems, and mentalities that are not open enough to change. However, the experiments should be continued and we should aim at ever greater cooperation with the laity, in the hope of finding the best road to new forms of membership.

Community renewal

Community renewal is the stumbling block in our Spiritan meetings, and yet it is the cornerstone for all renewal, as many Congregations have experienced.

The difficulties of certain 'de facto' situations should not prevent us from accepting the broad lines of community renewal and facing up to our duty to put into practice this priority of the General Chapter. The EGC suggested that it should be approached at various levels and asked the conferences of Major Superiors to give it their serious consideration.

The new Constitutions: the program for our apostolic life

Your replies to the questionnaire showed the importance you attach to the preparation of the Constitutions. We thank you for this response, which enabled the EGC to give some orientations for the first draft of the Constitutions, which will be sent to you eventually for your comments (cf. *Decisions of the EGC*). You could already give some attention to the difficulty that came up at the EGC concerning the relationship between apostolate and consecration. Meditation on Christ, on Libermann and on documents like *Evangelii Nuntiandi* could help resolve this difficulty. Of great importance too is the experience of so many confreres who have successfully integrated their apostolate and religious life.

Conclusion: Hope in the midst of poverty

It is in the writings of Libermann that we have found the best interpretation of this EGC, which was marked by the "signs of suffering":

"We are just a bunch of poor folk brought together by the will of the Master, who alone is our hope. If we had powerful means at our disposal, we would achieve nothing worthwhile; but, as we have nothing and desire nothing, we can form great projects, for our hopes are founded not on ourselves but on Him who is all-powerful" (N.D. IV, p. 303).

THE GENERALATE TEAM

The Generalate Team C.S.Sp. 195 Clivo di Cinna D0 136 ROMA Italia

DECISIONS OF THE ENLARGED GENERAL COUNCIL 1982

Supplement to I/D No. 32, October 1982

THE NEW CONSTITUTIONS

The Enlarged General Council recommends that the Plan proposed by the Preparatory Committee on the Constitutions be followed, in general, by the Drafting Committee. It favours retaining the first two parts of the Latin Rule, in Latin with a translation.

Two specialists in Canon Law are to be available as Consultors to the Drafting Committee.

The General Council should study the possibility of a time-schedule that would enable the Drafting Committee to present two drafts, the second of which would be ready by October 1985 in preparation for the Chapter in 1986.

Recommendations were made that the Constitutions should:

- stress the complementarity of the apostolate, consecrated life and community life;
- avoid all antinomy or dichotomy between the apostolate and the consecrated life;
 deal with Justice and Peace, or 'human liberation', as an integral part of evangelization and not as one type of work among others;
- treat of poverty as an evil to be eradicated, with confreres being aware of the causes of poverty and working for its elimination;
- emphasize solidarity, particularly financial, at all levels between members of the same community, and between communities, Districts and Provinces;
- not confine the concept of community life to exclusively Spiritan communities but take into account other forms as in SL, 89;
- emphasize 'révision de vie' (whatever be the terms used to describe it) in Spiritan life;
- not minimize Brothers' rights and identity in a clerical Congregation;
- treat very positively of Poverty and Chastity as values and signs of the Kingdom.

The General Council was urged to give serious consideration to the examination of new kinds of circumscriptions, with a view to the future. If necessary, a subcommittee could be set up for this purpose.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Identify and pinpoint priority targets for animation of communities for the next two years.

Undertake a study of the following tensions: religious/missionary; work/living; apostolate/community; demands of the community/demands of the apostolate — applying Libermann's thought in the context of community renewal.

Reaffirm our commitment to building communities in which each member will meet with acceptance, care and respect. Our experience proves that such a fraternity of life and prayer will enable confreres to give of their best in their Spiritan apostolate today. Community animation at all levels of the Congregation should be understood in this sense.

The EGC proposed that the document on Community Life (EGC/82/3) and the document 'Pour Vivre en Communauté' (EGC/82/18) be studied by the Major Superiors during their next regional meetings and that regional objectives be established for the next few years.

PRIORITIES AND URGENT SITUATIONS

(Superior General's Report)

Priorities:

The EGC asks the Major Superiors to respond as far as possible to the appeals for Pakistan (three teams of three or four confreres each); for Paraguay (three more confreres); for Angola (reinforcement of the dioceses of Lubango and Saurimo as well as of formation personnel). They deserve the special solidarity of the entire Congregation at this time.

The EGC asks the General Council to restate the criteria for the choice of the above three priorities in order

to evaluate future choices.

Urgent Situations:

The Enlarged General Council:

recognizes the urgent needs of the mission situations in Guinea-Bissau, Tambacounda, Kongolo, Mexico and Rose Hill (Mauritius) and recommends them for special consideration:

- commits itself again to support seriously, and show solidarity with, the New Foundations and the Young
- asks all meetings of Major Superiors to place these special needs of the Congregation on the agenda of regional meetings, where urgent situations can be dealt with before having recourse to the General Council;
- recommends to all Major Superiors the urgent appeals coming from some African countries for help for Refu-

expresses its admiration for the confreres in the Polish Province in their difficult situation and assures them of

its solidarity and support;

- requests the General Council to elaborate as clearly as possible the criteria for involvement in new developments on the part of the Council. Tensions can be avoided by clarifying the 'ground rules' by which such projects are assessed and undertaken at General Council level in its efforts to be open to the call to new situations:
- stresses the need for clarification of what is understood by the term 'values of internationality' in formation in the Congregation. It is important that the General Council continue to clarify the values of international formation and to balance them against other values;

recommends that the 'Fribourg proposal' for an international scholasticate there be studied by the General Council along with other proposals and possibilities for international formation;

welcomes the initiative taken by Kimmage in setting up a renewal course for English-speaking Spiritans and asks that it be helped as far as possible.

Justice and Peace:

The EGC recommends that the General Council give particular attention to coordination of information, collaboration with other institutes, and efforts to conscientize and motivate confreres in matters concerning Justice and Peace.

FINANCES

The Enlarged General Council:

- is in favour of re-introducing some form of contribution to the Generalate in order to help solve the financial problems of the General Administration itself, and also meet the demands coming from the new Provinces and Foundations:
- requests the General Administration to set up a committee of experts who will study our financial system and

make concrete proposals in line with the suggestions made by the Enlarged General Council;

asks the General Administration to continue with the animation model of government, decreasing expenses if that is possible without thereby decreasing the effectiveness of this model.

PLANNING

The Enlarged General Council:

is not in favour of setting up a special planning office at the Generalate;
supports and seriously encourages the General Council in pursuing a planning programme in the Congregation along the lines of the model presented in their document 'Planning'. One Councillor should be responsible;
favours the expansion of the facilities at the Generalate to include a Research/Planning element;

- accepts that a realistic decision to undertake planning involves about 25% of the time of the leadership and will involve considerable expense. Motivation or animation of the circumscriptions to 'planning' is part of the work of Visitors since planning without animation is a waste of time;

believes that the circumscriptions must be involved and take responsibility themselves for planning at their level:

suggests that initial steps in the process of planning for the Congregation could, and perhaps should, be undertaken by experts outside the Congregation;

recommends that:

a) planning should take into account the distinction and integration between our community and our work, and between the works of communities and of individuals;

b) planning should study disengagement and a move towards the periphery situations in an effort to collaborate with the General Council's call for personnel;

c) the Congregation's involvement and integration with the local Churches form part of the planning process

NEW FORMS OF COLLABORATION

The Enlarged General Council:

- acknowledges with appreciation the Report from the General Council on the development and experiences that are taking place in various circumscriptions;

recommends that, when new projects are being planned and assessed, account be taken of the resources in personnel potentiality evailable through New Forms of Collaboration.

I/D 33

THE GENERALATE TEAM

February 1983

Internationality Re-examined

General Chapters are convoked. Chosen topics are introduced, discussed, debated and approved. Final, carefully worded documents are produced and made available to all members. The 1968-69 General Chapter produced a monumental document which contained, among other things, a novel idea: internationality. Every Spiritan is invited to re-read it.

One of its results was that, in the 1970s, Foundations sprang up, with interculturalization (another name for internationality) as their trademark. Ventures into international teams were initiated. The North Americans took a bold step in experimenting with an international novitiate, and their daring is yielding fruit. International meetings have been con-

vened with considerable success.

Yet internationality remains problematic, misunderstood and largely unaccepted. The notion breeds fear and suspicion. It unsettles our older Provinces, whose preoccupation is to guard their autonomy as Provinces. The Southern Hemisphere confreres feel threatened with deracination. Their identity is at stake. This I/D would like to re-examine internationality: "The unexamined life is not worth living" (Socrates).

The present world view

The world is on the threshold of a new era, an era of global unity. Evidence of this is the constant recurrence in press, radio, television and summit conferences of terms like: dialogue, solidarity, interdependence, partnership, joint interests, equality, mutual respect, shared planet, a global community, a global vision, power sharing and their synonyms. The conclusion is that global problems will not be resolved unless they are addressed by most, if not all, nations working together. We are, as it were, in ascension, moving towards new heights. No longer within a particular small culture, a provincial culture, perhaps a ghetto culture, we have become citizens not only of a country but of the world — citizens, indeed, of the cosmos

Our Spiritan family

Our panorama ranges over five continents. The Congregation was born in Europe and until recently was heavily European. In this continent the Congregation has ten Provinces. In North America there are four Provinces. The Spiritan presence in South America started in 1885. Trinidad was a District as far back as 1863. The continent of Africa is the Congregation's first love. She matured the Spiritan family. Two Provinces, sixteen Districts, four Groups and three Foundations are eloquent testimony of what the continent did for the Congregation and vice versa. The Indian Ocean Islands (Madagascar, Reunion, Mauritius) meant a great deal to the Congregation in the early days of Blessed Jacques Laval and Fr. Le Vavasseur. Today, more than ever, they have a deep effect upon the Congregation. These islands have a common project in the Indian Ocean Foundation, which can become an opening towards Asia, as close relationships already exist between them and Asia.

Internationality: Are we prepared for it?

"The Congregation has always had an international character" (SL, 201). However, this character was not taken seriously enough throughout the history of the Congregation. Our traditional provincial system of training and missionary work obscured this. The thrust of our talk was in terms of our Province and our mission territories. Administrations and mission methodologies were as diverse as the number of Provinces. Now there is need to see ourselves in a different light. The Congregation must have in fact as well as in theory one membership in which every Spiritan sees his basic and most profound membership as that of his international Congregation. Provinces and Districts must no longer be seen as independent countries with their own nationality, their own naturalization process and their own missions.

Internationality: Why?

The rumblings of internationality are heard here and there in the Congregation today because "the old order changeth, giving place to the new". It is likely that the new Spiritan will be working with Spiritans of other nationalities than his own, partly because numbers are small in our scholasticates and large groups of the same language or nation are rarely possible, and partly because large national blocs are no longer desirable in many missionary situations (EGC 1976, Gen. Bull. 776, pp. 213-214). And, what is more, "the problems of today's world can only be solved when all forces are joined together and directed towards the same common aim" (Pope John Paul II).

This call to internationality arises:

a) From the signs of the times

In the political, economic and academic world, associations and conferences have mushroomed, aimed at stressing the growing awareness of our interdependence, for example: A New International Economic Order (NIEO).

"In view of these developments it is evident that no single state can properly pursue its own interests and perfection in isolation. The prosperity and progress of each state is part cause and part effect of the prosperity and progress of every other state" (Pope John Paul II). The signs of the times force us to think globally and internationally, even when acting on a local level. His Holiness has warned that "religious communities have a special responsibility to be sensitive to the signs of the times and to try to meet such needs as are the proper concern of the Church's ministry."

b) From the Church

The documents of the Second Vatican Council state that "one of the salient features of the modern world is the growing interdependence of men one on the other, a development very largely promoted by modern technical advances" (Gaudium et Spes, 23; cf. Lumen Gentium, 13 and 23; Apostolicam Actuositatem, 19; Inter Mirifica, 22; and Ad Gentes, 41). "Nations try harder every day to bring about a kind of universal community" (Gaudium et Spes, 9).

Thus arises the need for internationality. Because "present-day relationships between peoples and between nations demand the establishment of greater international cooperation... the more powerful a nation is, the greater becomes its international responsibility..." (Pope John Paul II). Consequently, the social teachings of the Church call us to greater interdependence and a sense of global responsibility and international collaboration in society and in the Church.

c) From within the Congregation

The writings of our Venerable Father, directives of our General Chapters and recent documents from the General Administration call attention to internationality. Fr. Libermann originally thought of foundations of his society outside of France "so that a wider scope of influence might be attained". He dreamt of foundations in Great Pritain, Cormany, Bolgium, Spain

and Portugal. "It would have been international in character with a combined missionary and educational aim" (Koren).

The prime mover in the new international awareness after so many years of provincialism was the Chapter of 1968-69. It affirmed that "it is desirable to set up international teams... To facilitate the formation of such international teams, Provinces should be ready to make appointments to Spiritan missions other than their own" (CDD, 383).

This was again taken up in 1974: "Men have become conscious of being fellow-citizens of One World and feel responsible for what happens anywhere in it. In these circumstances the Holy Spirit seems to be asking us to respond positively to the special missionary needs of our times by becoming men of worldwide vision and by making stronger the international character of our Institute" (GA, 25).

This Chapter mandated the Generalate to "continue to cooperate with Provinces and Districts in the setting up of international teams" (GA, 27).

Internationality came up again in the 1976 Enlarged General Council. Some of its resolutions were:

- "— The General Council and the Major Superiors bind themselves to make the confreres more aware of the reasons why internationality is today more necessary than ever before.
 - The presence in the same circumscription of confreres of different Provinces is one of the forms of internationality which we should further encourage.
- When the exigencies of a missionary situation require an international team, the General Council will come to an understanding with the Major Superiors so that they will put suitable confreres at its disposition" (Gen. Bull. 776, p. 213).

I/D No. 12 (Sept. 1977) attempted to explain "why we feel that a greater opening to internationality is necessary for the Congregation if it is to adapt to changing times. We are at a moment of great change in the world, and therefore in mission".

These, however, remain mere words. Internationality was, and is still, considered by many a Pandora's box. In 1980, the Superior General was emboldened to say in the name of his Council: "When we say 'internationality', we are speaking about getting beyond the frontiers and limits of nations and cultures. This translates itself into a close collaboration between circumscriptions, into co-responsibility in the whole gamut going from sincere interest in others to international teams, and through a whole series of variations" (Report to 1980 Chapter, Suppl. to Gen. Bull. 776, p. 60).

Despite our willingness to implement these decisions and mandates, internationality continues to hang over our heads like the sword of Damocles. In the 1980 General Chapter, it featured again. Not satisfied with making it essential in formation (SL, 201-205) and a constitutive element in the makeup of the General Council, it empowered the Superior General and his Council to "appoint personnel to a work which by its very nature requires international personnel" (SL, 228). The leitmotiv nature of internationality in the documents of the Congregation since 1968 is therefore very observable and makes it now an important aspect of our Spiritan life

Internationality: Obstacles

In the interest of developing this global consciousness, a truly lived internationality can be a visible sign of the kingdom, a genuine expression of the possibility of peoples coming together as brothers. Fear and scepticism, however, have made many Spiritans hesitant in the pursuance of this.

(a) These arise, firstly, from our shortsighted localism. We do not see why our time, attention and energy, already so heavily taxed, should be diverted to consider other problems which, if not less real, have apparently little bearing on the reality in which we work, and remain out of our reach and influence. In this context, internationality may appear to us to be something utopian, a kind of escapism from the demands that concrete situations place on us.

No doubt, there is some danger of running away from concrete local realities and taking refuge in a vaguely defined international apostolate. But then we cannot forget the international nature of the Spiritan vocation of putting ourselves "in manu Superiorum parati ad omnia; ubicumque pauperibus et infidelibus evangelizare, munia ecclesiastica infima et laboriosa, pro quibus ministri difficillime reperiuntur, non modo suscipere, sed etiam toto corde amare ac prae caeteris eligere" (Regulae, 3).

The standard of living of the peasants in Paraguay is one of the lowest in the whole of South America. The Marwari are the poorest and most neglected in Pakistan. They have no status or privilege and are untouchables, outcasts. Conditions in Angola are very trying, even unnerving. The Manjaks in Guinea-Bissau are "a people in migration". "An important cause of their migration is their poverty, exploitation by colonialists, insecurity and lack of the bare minimum for survival" (Pentecôte sur le Monde, No. 152). The Indians of Mexico have been described as the "poorest of the poor". Definitely these constitute "munia ecclesiastica infima et laboriosa".

With respect to these, all of us, wherever we are and whatever we do, have to express somehow the international character of our vocation. The Superior General has repeatedly enjoined on us "to think Congregation before Province". When we enter the Congregation, strictly speaking we do not join a particular Province, Foundation or District, but the corpus universale societatis. We are directly called to be "parati ad omnia: ubicumque pauperibus et infidelibus evangelizare".

(b) A second obstacle comes from excessive emphasis on the pastoral needs of our Province or District. We certainly have apostolic responsibilities towards our own Province, Foundation, District or culture and towards our own local Churches but this should not make us forget our Spiritan commitment to the more universal good of mankind and of the Church.

"We should not get so involved in local tasks that we are unable to think of any other need which does not directly fall under our concrete responsibility here and now. Sometimes the comfortable feeling of being 'at home' among people who know and understand us, the sense of security that a permanent job or working contract provide, greatly diminish our apostolic freedom and mobility, and our interest and concern for broader issues and problems" (Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J.).

Internationality: What it means for us

Internationality would therefore mean a close solidarity and a more generous sharing of our material and human resources to satisfy apostolic needs, wherever these needs are greater and more urgent. Internationality is vitally necessary for meeting the needs and problems that are not local in nature, but common to all Provinces, Foundations and Districts. At Carcavelos, a participant described internationality as "openness to all cultures". At Saverne, the formators, among other preferred descriptions, called it "an openness to living and working with people of different cultures and mentality when and where the needs of the apostolate demand it". Internationality could be summed up as an attitude of availability for the universal Church as a sacrament of unity.

Our present endeavours

International meetings

Our international gatherings, General Chapters, Enlarged General Councils of Rome, Knechtsteden and Carcavelos, the Young Spiritan meetings of Aranda and Gentinnes and the formators' meetings in Rome and Saverne have had the same result: "a sacred communion". These meetings have been strongly characterized by a sense of community and prayerful communitarian discernment of God's will. Spiritans from different cultural backgrounds and experiences, speaking different languages, came together as brothers to speak one common language: the charism of our Founders in today's Church-in-the-world. Such meetings foster a greater awareness of internationality and leave one with a feeling of "it is good for us to be here" (Mk 9:5), and "it is great to be a Spiritan".

International teams ("Teams made up of members from different Provinces have been set up", SL, 45.)

A few excerpts from reports will show the courage, missionary spirit and difficulties of our confreres who are living and working in international teams:

PAKISTAN (1977): "The call of Pakistan is a truly missionary situation that conforms pre-eminently with our traditional aims, as few other missionary situations do... Our conclusion is a resounding Yes to our involvement in Pakistan, but with at least three strong teams" (Report by Fr. Gross after Visit, Dec. 1981)

PARAGUAY (1967): "The international structure of the team is not questioned by any of them. They all accept it and even ask that the group at Lima, where there are only French confreres, should be internationalized" (Report by Fr. Torres Neiva after Visit, Dec. 1981).

International collaboration is also taking place in ANGOLA (1977) under very trying conditions, GUINEA-BISSAU (1980), ZAMBIA (1982), SOUTHERN AFRICA, ETHIOPIA and MEXICO. All these teams are in need of expansion.

International teams: Caveats

• Improvisation should be avoided in the constitution of an international team. Time should be taken to choose the members carefully

- Dominance of one culture and language should also be avoided.
- Language is unitive as well as divisive and alienating. A multinational team should agree on a common language, preferably the language of the place. Linguistic aptitude is absolutely necessary.
- Avoid too much dispersion. It is a danger to one's sanity and the development of a genuine religious life
- Some international teams are directly under the Generalate, e.g. Pakistan and Paraguay. Others are the result of inter-Provincial collaboration, which creates problems on the plane of obedience: "I belong to Paul, I belong to Apollos" (1 Cor. 3:4). This collaboration is devoid of focus since Provinces have diverse and divergent missionary methods. What are the powers of Provincials as regards international teams? What is their status?

How do we achieve internationality?

"The formation of every Spiritan should include an element of internationality" (SL, 202).

The 1968-69 General Chapter was categorically opposed to an international scholasticate (CDD, 352). The 1982 summer meeting of formators at Saverne strongly supported this Chapter stipulation. The 1980 precapitular responses show that the vast majority of the responses indicated agreement that we should in some way internationalize our formation. The question remains as to how this should be accomplished. Definitely not by creating a homogeneous and monolithic system of formation. Our heterogeneity has to be preserved. However, efforts to internationalize formation can be made by insistence on:

- The learning of other languages. "Language is a big stumbling block" to internationality (cf. SL, 204).
- A part of theological study, at least a one-year experience, in an international setting. This would be a way to develop a sense of internationality in young Spiritans.
- An international centre, or centres, for theological formation (CDD, 352; SL, 205). "Pastoral centres in Duquesne, Kimmage etc. should be enlarged rather than begin new centres" (Saverne meeting, 1982).
- More meetings of the Aranda/Gentinnes type on themes pertaining to Spiritan life. These should be serious and deep. Their success should not be judged by their euphoric atmosphere. Concrete and workable decisions must be taken.
- Exchanges of students between Province and Province and between Foundations and Provinces. Exchange here does not mean paternalism. It does not rest on the plane of helping. A big Province taking two or three students from a young Province or Foundation is not exchange. Exchange means that Ireland and Nigeria, the East African Foundation and France,

- or the United States, Brazzaville and Angola can interchange students on an equal basis. This is a way of fostering internationality. This exchange should be for apostolic work as well as studies.
- Students getting a chance of living a missionary experience outside their Province of origin. The same manner of acting as in exchange applies here. It is a two-way traffic.

Action!

"Mission today asks us to abandon self-sufficiency" (SL, 48).

The call of internationality demands of all of us sacrifice, self-emptying and conversion. This conversion is born of:

- -(a) Raising our consciousness to an awareness that we belong to an international group. As Spiritans our consciousness is global.
- (b) Conscience deepening. This requires an examination of our mind set.
- (1) Is our vision a world vision? Do we have a global sensitivity?
- (2) What kind of witness do we bear in a divided world? Do we witness to unity in diversity? Is our witness to internationality (in living and not just in work) something which people genuinely recognize in us?
- (c) Confidence building. Confidence comes from vision because vision generates hope, that virtue whose presence or absence determines in this case, in the last analysis, whether we choose internationality or not.

Conclusion

- "Stand together and act together."
- "There are many needs of the apostolate... which you cannot meet adequately unless you stand together and act together" (Pope John Paul II).

This is the thrust of the appeal for internationality. To act internationally, we need to be international: agere sequitur esse.

Sympathy, collaboration and availability are imperative if the Congregation would be abreast of our fast changing times. "We must try something. It is by trying for a few years that we come to a deep knowledge of the Divine Will for the work we are undertaking. We begin by giving it a form of its own" (Fr. Libermann, 1842, N.D. IV, 177).

Some Congregations have gone beyond this stage. They are more preoccupied now with inter-Congregational collaboration. For us Spiritans, at any rate, the mandate to internationality is clear, though its realization may be complex. It is up to each of us to try to broaden our horizons.

THE GENERALATE TEAM

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THE GENERALATE TEAM

December 1983

"Towards the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1)

"It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going. By faith he arrived, as a foreigner, in the promised Land, and lived there as if in a strange country, dwelling in tents..." (Heb. 11:8-9).

"It was by faith that Moses left Egypt and was not afraid of the king's anger; he held to his purpose like a man who could see the Invisible... It was by faith that they crossed the Red Sea as easily as dry land, while the Egyptians, trying to do the same, were drowned" (Heb. 11:27,29).

On the road to exile, having lost the security of their land and the temple, the Israelites wavered in their faith. In their distress in a foreign land, they recognized the One "who leads you in the way that you must go" (Is. 48:17), heard the call to "widen the space of your tent" (Is. 54:2) and opened themselves to the "hope of the islands" (Is. 51:5).

"With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us, we too, then, should throw off everything that hinders us, especially the sin that clings so easily, and keep running steadily in the race we have started. Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection" (Heb. 12:1-2).

Walking in the strength of faith

Challenged by the developments of the past twenty years, the Congregation has started on a new journey, walking on a difficult road towards a still unknown country. "Where are we heading for?" is a question that confreres often put to us.

In reply, we would invite you as a start to accompany us through the different continents to discover the signs of this new Spiritan journey and get an idea of the direction it is taking.

In the diversity of its paths you will be able to discern with us some important signposts guiding us on our way, namely: a movement towards the periphery or frontier-situations, towards greater universality, towards renewal of life and towards the future.

Any look at the signs, even a detailed analysis of them, will not be complete if it does not at the same time look for the hand that "leads you in the way that you must go" (Is. 48:17) and does not fix itself on the "Invisible". Any motivation for the journey will remain weak and fragile if it is not founded on "the Word of the Lord, today", to help us to walk in the strength of faith. We will offer an attempt at this discernment, while fully aware that the ways of the Lord are inscrutable and full of surprises.

Making a start...

We, who have the good fortune to be able to meet confreres in the various continents, invite you to discover with us some of the recent signs that allow us to say: "The Congregation has made a start", even though there may be sluggishness and difficulties that impede progress.

A time of trial: an opportunity for renewal

In EUROPE, Provinces in difficulty are taking new initiatives. Holland has set up a new team for mis-

sionary animation at Eindhoven. Belgium is giving new impetus to the animation of young people at Gentinnes. Germany is welcoming, in the Province's communities and on the missions, young people who want to be 'missionaries for a time'. The Province of Poland is growing again and rejuvenating its membership with ordinations each year.

In France, the stress this year is on each community's 'project'. Portugal, Spain and Switzerland are renewing their missionary animation and vocation work. A centre for international Spiritan formation is developing in England, with students from the Indian

Ocean, Nigeria and Germany (there is an international centre also in Rome). Ireland has been undertaking commitments in poor urban areas.

In NORTH AMERICA, the four Provinces — Canada, Trans-Canada, USA East and USA West — are working more and more closely together, and the novitiate is held in common. Next summer, a congress entitled 'Spiritan in 1984' will bring together all the young members in formation. The Provinces have set up a joint committee on Justice and Peace, and work together for Haitian refugees. The orientation is towards 'poor and abandoned' minorities, and there are interesting experiments with new forms of membership. In Mexico, confreres are working among the Indians.

A time of growth in the young Churches: an opening to other horizons

In the SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE, harvest time and seedtime coincide; the old and the new intermingle and interact in shaping the mission of the future.

In LATIN AMERICA, the six Districts of Brazil, formerly completely distinct, are opening up to each other. Formation in the Brazilian Foundation is becoming a common enterprise. Some local Spiritan priests are already at work in the country, and one will soon be going as a missionary to Angola. The movement towards the periphery is stimulating research on a spirituality of frontier situations. Thus our confreres in Paraguay give us the witness of a life lived poorly among the poor, in a spirit of solidarity with them.

In the WEST INDIES, Trinidad continues its effort at inculturation. Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana reviewed their engagements with the Bishops in April 1983. The Puerto Rican Foundation will soon have its first ordinations and will thus start a new missionary venture.

How are we to sum up the developments experienced by our confreres in AFRICA in recent times? With the growth of the local Churches and the diminution of our personnel, we are handing over important responsibilities and cutting back on commitments. It is a time for reassessing and rejuvenating our missionary service in its various forms:

- helping the local Church towards self-sufficiency, as in Kwara-Benue. . .
- moving towards more difficult areas or areas of first evangelization within our circumscriptions: in Kenya, Tanzania, Yaoundé, Doumé, Kongolo. . .
- moving beyond the frontiers of a District towards areas of special need: from Senegal to Guinea-Bissau, from Makurdi to Yola...
- giving special attention to local Churches in difficult situations: in Gambia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Ga-

bon (in the Central African Republic the signs are promising)...

- reassessing our presence in Churches that are becoming more able to organize themselves, such as the Congo...
- undertaking work for Justice and Peace, for slum dwellers in rapidly growing cities, and for dialogue, especially with Islam (Algeria, Mauritania)...

In all these developments we can see a renewal of life, inspired by our Spiritan sources and by the concrete situations.

The Spiritan presence on the road to the future is seen even more clearly in the missionary awakening of local Churches. Our YOUNG PROVINCES and FOUNDATIONS are playing a decisive role in this.

- The Province of Nigeria is pursuing several aims: training leaders for itself; taking root in the country especially in poor parishes and areas of first evangelization; going out to other countries like Zambia and Zimbabwe, and even to other continents; inculturating the Spiritan charism; striving for financial self-sufficiency.
- The Province of Angola offers us the witness of its extraordinary courage and its fidelity to a people in distress.
- The Foundations continue to grow in the Districts. The East African Foundation has already sent several young Spiritans to Zambia, where, with some Irish confreres, they form an international group. The Central African Foundation has priests in Cameroon and Gabon. The more recent West African Foundation is growing, especially with vocations from Ghana.

The Spiritan missionary adventure is by no means over — it is changing and taking on a new form.

The same prospects are opening up in the IN-DIAN OCEAN — in Madagascar, Reunion and Mauritius. A new adventure is beginning with the Foundation, which, being at the crossroads of different continents, can envisage new directions, especially towards Asia.

In ASIA, our confreres are working for the "poorest and most abandoned" in Pakistan. Our entry into Asia marks our desire to engage ourselves in the continent that has been called "the greatest missionary challenge for the future". Finally, our 'tour' comes to an end with the group of Spiritans working among the poor in PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

For each of the circumscriptions we could have listed many other signs, and, of course, many of the initiatives and orientations are common to a great number of circumscriptions.

... on the road to the future

Taking an overall look at the signs of our present commitments, there would seem to be four

important movements, which are also four ways towards the future.

1. Towards the periphery

We are all in solidarity with each other, and together we carry out our various commitments. All the steps on the road are important, the little as well as the great, and make possible our movement towards the periphery and frontier situations. These are to be found especially in:

- work in areas of first evangelization or in abandoned or difficult areas;
- work for migrants, refugees, marginalized people, and abandoned or oppressed minorities;
- commitment to the struggle for Justice and Peace;
- work to relieve distress caused by urbanization;
- work in the areas recognized as the four main activities of the mission of the future: proclamation, dialogue, liberation and inculturation (Sedos Seminar, 1981).

It is hoped that the movement towards the periphery, already visible in many of our commitments, will continue to grow in importance so as to meet the demands of our times, to rejuvenate the ideals of the Congregation and to confirm it in its special vocation.

2. Towards greater universality

The new missionary era, it is said, will be marked by a new sense of universality. Certain expressions already in circulation indicate this: "mission in all six continents", "mission from everywhere to everywhere", "mission as exchange between Churches", "the whole Church is missionary", "the young Churches missionary in their turn", "the four main activities of the mission of the future: proclamation, dialogue, liberation, inculturation".

We are on the road to greater universality in various ways, notably by:

- our movement towards the periphery and our attention to new situations;
- our opening to Asia. Aware of its importance for the future, we will continue to give consideration to it. Are we not called to take other steps in this direction?
- growing attention to dialogue, especially with Islam. Our reflection on this dialogue is still in its early stages, but there is certainly a new road for mission here:
- research on new forms of membership, which will facilitate contact with areas not easily accessible to priests;
- solidarity and coresponsibility between circumscriptions this will help us to take up certain challenges on a joint basis;
- a growing openness to internationality in formation, so as to prepare for intercultural experiences.

A new spirit of universality is moving through the Congregation and will get stronger still because of the young Provinces and Foundations. Through them we will enter together into the new missionary era and we will see:

- the incarnation of the Spiritan charism in new cultures, giving the Congregation a new visage;
- more departures from the Southern Hemisphere for the universal mission — a movement that will keep on growing;
- more exchanges between Churches, indicating that mission is "from everywhere to everywhere", with missionaries being witnesses of their own local Church in another part of the universal Church;
- the diversification and internationalization of the Spiritan presence, which has already begun in certain places;
- a Congregation that has become more universal in its membership.

3. Towards renewal of life

"For new wine, new wineskins" (Mk 2:22). To meet the developments and changes in the world, the Church and its mission, there must be a renewal in religious and missionary life. For new situations, a new apostolic life. Every institute is challenged to this renewal, which will probably be either the stumbling block or the foundation stone for the institutes of the future.

The movement towards a renewal of life shows itself in different signs, notably in :

- a return to our sources, and especially to our Founders. More and more we see Spiritan sessions and days of recollection being held for the study of our Founders;
- the search for Spiritan identity. What is our place and our role in these changes and in these new situations?
- community renewal, especially at regional level. In most places there is a search for a deepening of community life, in which the members share in each other's life and apostolate;
- spiritual and religious renewal. More and more confreres are working towards this. Personal and community prayer is taking on new importance. Apostolic life and religious life are becoming better integrated.

(N.B.: The next I/D will take up in more detail the question of renewal of life.)

4. Towards the future

We believe that the start that has already been made and the important movements that are taking place are leading us on to the future. The 'signs' that have been referred to briefly above are so many words of encouragement and hope that we speak to each other. We do not think that we are being deceived when we say that the signs of life seem to be stronger than the signs of death and that our progress is keeping step with developments in the world.

Our optimism does not, however, make us ignore the shadows that there are nor the conversions that still have to be made. We are still at an early stage in the renewal of institutes, and of our own in particular. That is why it is important to fix our gaze on the vitality that is being shown, so as to move with it and reinforce it.

"Your word is a light for my path" (Ps. 118: 105)

The words of hope that we have found among our confreres assume their full meaning when the Word of God shines on them, when we try to understand them in the light of faith, putting them in the context of God's dealings with his chosen people and the ways in which He leads those who listen to Him. The words of our confreres will thus become "words of God for us today" and help us to walk in faith. We may be mistaken at times but we must hold on to the essential and be determined to move forward in a spirit of faith.

Let us, then, listen to what the Lord could be saying to us today:

A call

You have seen for yourselves by many signs what I have done for you (cf. Ex. 19:4 ff). Changes and developments have set you on your way. Recognize my call in them as once I called my servant Abraham: "Leave your country for the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1).

Leave your country for. . .

I have uprooted you, I have made you leave the country you were living in, I have invited you to leave the familiar ways and structures and security that were yours until now. You know that, when I act like this, it is not through some whim but because I have a definite plan. See how I made Abraham leave his country, and led the people of Israel out of Egypt and later into exile. I uprooted Peter and Paul and so many others so as to make them free for a new adventure.

By unexpected paths

Just as you have begun to do, on the strength of my word, so, on the strength of my word, did they leave everything, "not knowing where they were going" (Heb. 11:8). See too how I revealed my plan to them little by little, one day at a time, by unexpected paths, sometimes with great detours and through many trials. They experienced weariness, darkness and nostalgia for the past. I allowed that so as to respect their liberty and bring them to recognize the hand that led them on their way (cf. ls. 48:17) and have them walk in faith like people who have "seen the Invisible" (cf. Heb. 11:27). In a diversity and multiplicity of ways, you too have followed this call.

Through the desert

I know, it is difficult to leave one's country for a new adventure. That is why I draw near to those whom I call for a new mission and invite them to draw near to me. I led my people through the desert; I made Jeremiah my intimate friend; I allowed the Israelites to be exiled from their land so as to open up new missionary perspectives to them; I led my Son out into the desert to prepare Him for his mission; I sent Paul into Arabia for him to open himself still more to the mission that I had allowed him to glimpse on the road to Damascus. See what I have done for you too: I have awakened you to a renewal of life; I am leading you into the desert, and there I will speak to your heart (cf. Hos. 2:14); you will give yourself more fully to me, to find the strength and courage to enter the land that I will show you.

God gives us brothers

Here is another word for the future. You have seen how I invite young people to join your ranks, even in continents that are in crisis. And lift up your eyes and see: from far-off lands they come to you (cf. Is. 49: 18). By calling young people to you from the Southern Hemisphere as well, I am preparing you for the new missionary era.

Signs of hope and conversion

Rejoice at all the signs of hope for the future that I have shown you in your life in different parts of the world. Take heart and continue on the road you have set out on in my name. It is a long road that leads to the land that I will show you, but you must walk in the strength of faith. There are many steps that you still have to take, and that is why my promises for the future are always accompanied by a call to conversion. "Seek me and you will live" (Amos 5:4).

Words of hope that we think we see in the present life of the Congregation! Words of encouragement to help us undertake the necessary conversions. If we have wished to address this message to you, it is because we seem to be at a point that calls for a 'second conversion' (a theme that will be taken up in the next I/D).

* * * * *

THE GENERALATE TEAM

"If only easy things were to be undertaken in the Church, what would have become of the Church? St. Peter and St. John would have continued fishing on Lake Tiberias and St. Paul would never have left Jerusalem. I can fancy that someone who thinks himself something and counts on his own powers may be stopped before an obstacle, but when we count on our Master alone what difficulty can we fear?"

Libermann, L.S. II, 457.

"To seize the hope set before us" (Hebr. 6:18)

The last I/D drew our attention to a number of signs that show us that the Congregation is moving towards the renewal of life asked for by Vatican II. In this issue we will push our enquiry a bit further and reflect with you on the scope and urgency of this renewal. As the word 'renewal' is ambiguous (we often hear of 'charismatic renewal' today), we want to make it clear from the beginning that we are using it in the sense of adaptation and renewal of religious life, as described in *Perfectae Caritatis*.

Renewal takes many forms

When we read, in *Spiritans Today*, No. 1, the replies of confreres to a request for reflections on their experiences of renewal, we soon realize that Spiritan renewal takes many forms and is lived out in the heart of the concrete situation in which each one finds himself.

As a starting point for our reflection we will take some of the more significant of these replies and try to pick out from them some essential aspect of Spiritan renewal.

1) The changing missionary situation

One reply concerns the experience of listening to a young Church:

«To serve a young Church seeking its own way of growing and maturing means to divest oneself of Western categories in order to receive and appreciate the African way of living. A divesting which asks for much humility and disinterestedness! A sharing of joys and pains, hopes and doubts. Add to that the experience of violence, of the struggle for survival, of insecurity. The circumstances oblige one to turn to the essential and to see Christ in every human face...

I feel the need to invoke the Holy Spirit. May He bring about what He alone can — the miracle of faith and grace — in the heart of this people! I suffer from the slowness of the people to become open to grace! I suffer from being such a poor sign of the love of God! This brings me to give my life so that they may have Life! It is curious that more than ever I want to plunge into the freshness of the great mystics; I badly need prayer, silence, a deeper community life. This is all new for meln

2) Frontier situations

For other confreres it is the experience of frontier situations that leads them to the heart of renewal:

"As the situation offered little hope for the future (with the constant insecurity of wartime conditions), it was natural to think of moving elsewhere. Should I stay or go? But there was another question: are not these situations the ones most in conformity with our specific end? To work without seeing the results, to die like the seed in the earth — is that not one of the characteristics of our charism? I could not see clear-For me this was all a slow apprenticeship to patience, perseverance, long-suffering, humble abandonment, knowing how to wait for God's moment, to recognize and accept that it is God's work infinitely more than ours, that is to say, to be seized by the miracle of the Redemption. Easy to say but very difficult to accept and live! . . . Then I remembered Libermann's word: 'what is important is not knowledge but holiness'. All that made me admit my poverty and my littleness. To stay, that would mean counting on the miracle of grace, in myself and in oth-

3) Getting back to the essential

Another testimony comes from a Spiritan who during the last few years has shared the life of many of our confreres and has reflected with them:

"What strikes me about Spiritans in general is their courage and, in spite of new situations created by the presence of local clergy and the decrease in the number of missionaries, an ardent zeal for the apostolate. But there are also cases of fatigue due to the complexity of certain situations and to the process of aging.

I have just reread the reports of our regional meetings. Everywhere one sees a desire for genuine spiritual renewal, at both personal and community level, based on our Spiritan consecration and on Libermann's thought. Our confreres have a deep awareness that the Spirit of God is at work among them, though they may not know how to express this or even how to translate it into action. They feel also that He is at work in the mission He has entrusted to them, but it is difficult at times to discern his mode of presence.

For many of them their community life is not as deep as they would like it to be, and especially they have not got a deep enough personal prayer life on which to base it."

4) The trial of a crisis

The experience of a grave crisis and a crucifying trial can lead a whole Province to renew itself:

"Confreres from other Provinces seem to surround our Province with a sort of mysterious halo, much as Lazarus emerging from the tomb must have awakened the curiosity of the people of his time. Our Province has been credited with a resurrection which to my mind is far from being complete.

Much more modestly, I can say that we are trying to live a 'refoundation' after a period of grave trials. What is certain is that this period of trial has enabled us to go through a joint conversion, to turn towards the Lord and open ourselves to the influence of his grace. This is certainly the most important aspect of our so-called 'miracle'.''

5) Difficult ministries

A difficult and unfruitful ministry can also open the way to renewal of life. Here a confrere tells us of his paschal experience through contact with Muslims:

"I felt myself called from the beginning to work in a Muslim country. Many people were saying: Why go where there are no conversions, when priests are lacking in other places? I could give no reasonable justification but I felt called to those people. In the course of time a doubt entered my head: Does the Lord still love you? I understood that for me the desert of prayer was necessary because I was loving the Lord for myself and not for him. Then I discovered the tenderness of God for all men and found once more the joy and peace of my first gift... I saw very strongly the tenderness of the Father revealed by Jesus Christ in Mary. I feel myself much more fragile, less sure of myself, but with total confidence in God."

We could quote many other cases, for similar experiences of renewal are to be found throughout the Congregation. But these few examples, taken from among many, are enough to help us pick out some of the essential features of the conversion that the Church and the world require of us today.

At the heart of renewal: "experience of the Spirit"

(cf. Mutuae Relationes, Part 2)

We can sum up in four main points the essential elements in these testimonies, and others like them, that express what the Congregation is living today:

- Renewal comes from lived experience.
- Renewal is an experience of the Spirit.
- It is a guestion of apostolic renewal.
- Renewal is the work of saints and prophets.

1) Renewal comes from lived experience

When we speak of renewal, we think of lived experiences. Behind each renewal there is an experience of a creative type. In the ideological phase there is a good deal of theorizing: one feels the need for renewal and seeks the solution at the level of ideas, study and discussion. Someone is asked to study the Founder's charism, another the first Rule, another the Congregation's tradition. These are all important but they do not go to the heart of the matter. Everyone is busy studying, but no one is con-

verted. The charism of the Congregation is rediscovered, rethought and reformulated, but as an ideology rather than as a paschal event.

In the creative phase, the phase of foundation or refoundation, lived experience becomes essential. There is a surge of life in the Holy Spirit, springing up as from a source and going ahead of norms and laws. A simple biography cannot convey it.

It is not by chance that the time of foundation is a time of experience. The same phenomenon occurs when one takes the road of renewal, which has comothing of the 'state of foundation'. No renewal of any kind can be effected by working at it theoretically at one's desk, nor even during a Chapter. These procedures certainly have their importance but they are not enough to renew the Congregation.

Renewal arises from the heart of a personal or community experience, in which the Holy Spirit himself is the chief agent. And that is why it is the life of the confreres that is the most important thing at the time of renewal as at the time of foundation. Renewal begins always with a biography: the story of a person or a group in a particular place. We know how the basic intuitions of our Founders sprang from their lived experiences. When Libermann, for example, says: "God is all", we know that this affirmation springs from his own experience of God at the moment of his conversion.

During these years since the Council we have produced lots of beautiful, deep, even demanding, texts; but we have hardly had time to live them. We need to go through a sort of 'universal novitiate' to experience what these documents propose, to submit them to the test of life.

2) "Experience of the Spirit"

The expression "experience of the Spirit" is taken from *Mutuae Relationes* and concerns the Founders charism. It is the phrase that best sums up the essence of renewal.

At times of great change and new directions, when a new world is being born, there is a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. A time of renewal is always a time of the Holy Spirit. It is a time of exile and of the desert, a time when God prepares a new covenant with his people.

The key to renewal can be none other than that of deepening spirituality: the experience of the Spirit must be lived in depth. The discovery of new expressions of our missionary life and our religious consecration can only be the fruit of a deep experience of faith and an intense communion with God.

All the examples that we quoted at the beginning stress that the experience of renewal included a rediscovery of the Holy Spirit and of the contemplative dimension of apostolic life. They speak of this discovery in terms of wonder and amazement.

In all these examples we are in contact with what has been called a 'second conversion' — that decisive and definitive turning towards what is essential in our Spiritan life and towards the basic values that underlie it. It is not a question of spiritual withdrawal, but of a conversion to the very source of apostolic life, "that life of love and holiness which the Son of God lived on earth", according to Libermann (ND 508). We must find in the heart of our apostolic life the inspiration for the renewal of our communities.

We are living in a period of transition and of new situations. To adapt to a new situation one needs a new interior attitude. We cannot adapt to the new situation of the missionary Church or of the changing world without renewing our spirituality and our faith. Events have forced us to change our missionary methods, but not necessarily our interior attitude. We are not lacking in renewed structures, updated documents and even a modern missionary outlook,

but all of that may have come before conversion. New wine in old wineskins! That is good neither for the wine nor for the wineskins!

The difficulty of adapting to this period of transition can be seen in confreres who no longer feel at ease in the Congregation and who seek their spiritual nourishment elsewhere. It is difficult to find volunteers for situations of typically Spiritan urgency, while there are so many confreres in good health engaged in less urgent ministry.

3) Apostolic renewal

The last I/D spoke of different movements that can be seen today in the life of the Congregation: a movement towards the periphery, towards universality, towards renewal of life, and towards the future. Renewal of life is one of these movements, which are not parallel movements from which each one can choose his own path. They form part of a fundamental, global attitude that situates us in God's 'today for the Congregation. We should not be satisfied with merely correcting a few errors and touching up our regulations and our way of acting. A 'second conversion' requires us to go to the essential, to the roots, and get back to a 'state of foundation'. Either we become members of a Congregation in a 'state of foundation' or we shall be the last members of a Congregation in decline. Renewal is not optional. For example, the General Chapter asked us to go to the periphery, to frontier situations. These commitments are important for the Congregation and for its conver-Wherever the Church dedicates itself to the poor, it renews itself and regains vitality. But we are not prepared to live in frontier situations. To live in such situations means to live in insecurity, and our spiritual horizons are limited. We have a lot of trouble in sharing a spirituality that is suited to the world of the oppressed. Their conditions of life leave little space for silence, recollection and prayer, and the reality of their situation must be expressed in a different sort of prayer life. Maybe there will be victims, and even martyrs, before we arrive at the goal, but these frontier situations will more and more become the decisive areas in tomorrow's mission.

This spirituality will certainly have to contain the essential features of any life of union with God: times of silence and of community celebration and sharing. But it should be a simple spirituality, based on the realities of everyday life, harsh though they may be. It will be lived out in an environment that is indifferent or hostile to the gospel, in the struggle and improvisation that marks the life of the poor, who are not masters of their time. But it must also find time for such seemingly gratuitous things as adoration and contemplation.

These frontier situations will have a decisive role to play in the conversion of the Congregation. It is the poor who will evangelize us and teach us to express the fundamental values of our consecrated life: availability, simplicity, spontaneity in prayer — making a prayer of one's whole life. We need these 'sign' situations to rediscover the freshness and 'inspiration of our origins' (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 2). We must go to the house of Cornelius to discover the new ways of the Spirit.

Another example is the movement towards universality, which brings us to the heart of the local

Churches: "the Church which is at Rome... at Corinth... at Brazzaville...", with the features of Rome, of Corinth, of Brazzaville. They do not spring up readymade. They have to be helped to grow and to find their identity, with the culture and flavour of each place. The word of God becomes a seed of new life not in the hands of the sower but in the earth. In adapting to different ways of expressing the faith, there is a whole conversion to be undergone, and we must learn to read the signs of different times and places. It is in this context that we see the importance of the new Foundations. We have been marked by our whole history and formation with their view of missionary 'exportation', and it is hard for us to make this change of optic without a deep conver-

4) A time for saints and prophets

These last 15 or 20 years since the Council have been a time of renewal for religious institutes. As we look back over these years, we can distinguish three phases or moments in this renewal: the renewal of structures, personal renewal, and community renew-

The first phase has been the renewal of structures, which is not what had been foreseen. Perfectae Caritatis speaks of the renewal of structures only in the third place, after renewal of life and of the spirit. In fact, concern for adaptation to modern times has almost completely dominated these postconciliar years. The great preoccupation of religious has been how to witness to Christ in the working life and the frontier situations of the world today. maintaining their distance from the world, they have passed to a policy of presence and dialogue. This change of optic has brought about a good many structural changes, with flexibility and openness becoming more important (including openness to the action of the Holy Spirit), as well as coresponsibility, dialogue and personal initiative.

This phase has been an important one, for renewal is not possible unless structures are adapted to support and foster the new outlook. In the course of it, there was need especially for theologians, with their study and research. But it is time now to go on to the phases of personal and community renewal. We have nearly all we need now for renewal, and the revision of our Constitutions is well under way. It is time to move from research to conversion and renewal of heart. Either we seriously undertake this conversion or the whole process of renewal remains blocked. It is a delicate moment, and one that in fact may take a good deal of time, but we have to go through with it.

Up to now we have needed experts and theologians, but now is the time for prophets and saints. In a letter to St. Teresa of Avila, St. Peter of Alcantara reproached her for consulting theologians and canonists on a point which was not within their competence, namely the reform of the Carmelites. "If it were a legal matter or a theological discussion," he wrote, "you could turn to them, but in matters of tence, namely the reform of the Carmelites. sanctity it is to saints that you must turn, for no one can give advice except on what he has himself experi-

True renewal cannot spring from merely human maturity nor even from ordinary spirtual maturity, but only from the spirtual depth that is in the hearts of the saints. And this is what is lacking at times in our efforts at renewal: we need real saints and prophets.

Fr. Libermann puts it even more forcefully: "'I have come to cast fire on the earth,' said Jesus. Wishing to produce this blaze, He will certainly put burning torches in the hands of those He charges to light it. Why are there so few incendiary saints? Because there are so few real saints. The torches go out or produce no more than the flicker of a match' (Instructions to Missionaries, 1851).

THE GENERALATE TEAM

"It is impossible for you to sanctify yourself without working might and main for the salvation of the souls entrusted to you, and it is scarcely possible for you to sanctify those souls while neglecting yourself.

How important this reflection is! For priests often think of their own salvation alone, and souls are somewhat neglected. They have more zeal for recollection and the other virtues which tend to their own sanctification than they have for the salvation of souls. This is a great fault. Once we are priests we belong to ourselves no more, we belong to souls according to the divine will which makes use of us in their service for his good pleasure.

Others, on the contrary, under the pretext of zeal for souls, are entirely given to their ministry without taking care of their own sanctification, which suffers thereby. They do still more harm than the first group. They must first procure the glory of God in their own soul. Furthermore, if they are holy they will save many more souls with a lot less activi-

ty. So one must be done and the other not omitted."

Libermann, N.D., II, 472.

nformation—documentation

I/D 36

THE GENERALATE TEAM

October 1984

"This is the favourable time" (2 Cor. 6:2)

An ongoing reflection

Can we say now to the whole Congregation: "This is the favourable time"? A time of special striving for renewal? A point at which the call to conversion becomes particularly urgent?

For the past two years these questions have engaged our attention. They emerged in our meetings with you, and came up in our discussions on the life of the Congregation in these rapidly changing times. We were hesitant to reply, as we realized that finally it is simply God's call that we must interpret.

The theme we chose for our annual retreat at Assisi in October 1983 was 'Second Conversion in Libermann'. The question is: "Have we arrived at the decisive stage that could be called a second conversion?" Evaluating the positive and negative signs at the level of the Congregation as a whole, we concluded that the process of discernment should continue, in contact with the conferes.

We shared some of our reflections on this point with you in the last two I/Ds. 'Towards the land that I will show you' (I/D 34, Dec. 1983) gave some of the signs of making a new start in the Congregation, as seen in four movements: towards the periphery; towards greater universality; towards renewal of life; and towards the future. 'To seize the hope set before us' (I/D 35, Feb. 1984) went a step further, reflecting with you on the scope and urgency of renewal in religious institutes.

We continued this discernment in our visits, and the meeting of the Constitutions Commission at Carcavelos, Dec. 1983-Jan. 1984, helped to clarify the issues.

Our conclusions

In May 1984 we went for a two-day recollection to share what we had seen and heard among you, especially on the question: "Are we at a point that could be called a second conversion of the Congregation?" In our evaluation we came to the following conclusions:

- We can confirm the 'new start' of the Congregation and the four movements or orientations that can be seen (I/D 34 and 35).
- a There are signs of renewal that we have already

pointed out. We note a certain readiness to go still further.

- Reflection on our Spiritan vocation is taking place, with both a return to our sources and a desire to adapt our vocation to the needs of our age. This reflection was very much in evidence at Carcavelos.
- More and more confreres seem to be touched by grace, renewing themselves in their apostolic vocation, deepening their interior life, sometimes undergoing a real conversion. This comes out especially in private conversations, in which the best of a confrere is often revealed.
- Circumscriptions are taking up personal and community renewal as the principal element in their animation.
- There are also some negative signs, but these are less obvious than the positive ones.

Vision for the two years to come

This long and sometimes difficult process of discernment has led us to the following vision, which will guide our animation during the remaining two years of our mandate:

- The response to the changes of our times and the present 'new start', far from being completed, is to be continued. It is becoming all the time clearer that we are at a stage of *re-foundation* in view of the new missionary era.
- In this process of re-foundation, looking at the signs and especially at the readiness to go still further, we think we can see God's call to the *second conversion* of the Congregation a vitally important stage for institutes that are faced with the possibility of life or death.
- The call to a second conversion of the Congregation is a call to *individual conversions*, both of each member of the Congregation and of the different circumscriptions.
- Personal and community renewal should take the form of a return to essentials.

Our certitude in this vision remains open to verification. It does not go beyond the 'chiaroscuro' of the ways of the Lord. There is enough light to point out the way to us, but also enough darkness for us not to forget that we have to wall in faith.

The paths of re-foundation

Called to re-foundation

The world that we have to evangelize is in the throes of rebirth and aspires towards a "new world order". To reply to this world in transition, the Church has been trying since Vatican II to renew itself, striving to bring about that "other Church" envisaged by the Council and bearing the promise of a "new missionary era". It is in this world and this Church which are being born that the call to re-foundation and conversion makes itself heard.

For the past few years we have been trying together to read the 'words' that the discreet hand of God is writing in the new situations and in our replies to them. We have set off in new directions, we are in a period of transformation which is far from complete and which is tending towards that "other Congregation". The Draft of the new Rules and Constitutions reflects the essentials of this transformation and sets out the more important paths that we must follow in the process of re-foundation.

Drawing inspiration from our sources Our particular vocation

There can be no true re-foundation without drawing inspiration from our sources — the Founders and our living tradition — and interpreting them for our times. It is a question of our particular vocation within the Church's mission. In the growing interest which we see being shown in our sources, we recognize a call to move in this direction. And, as if to draw our attention to its importance, two beatifications — those of Fr. Laval and Fr. Brottier — mark this stage in our renewal.

And so we encourage especially: publications and translations of our sources; seminars and days of recollection based on our Founders; the development of Spiritan 'holy places' – that of Fr. Laval in Mauritius, of Fr Brottier at Auteuil, of Fr. Libermann at Rue Lhomond and Saverne; and research on Spiritan spirituality. We may pick out two traits that were common to Fr. Laval and Fr. Brottier and that should mark us all: they were both witnesses of God's love for the poor; and they were both very active while being men of prayer.

Seeking unity of life For the Mission

You are well aware of what is by now a sort of traditional family dispute among us on the tension between being a missionary and living a religious community life. The way of conceiving and unifying these essential elements in the Spiritan vocation has a bearing on our options and lifestyle. The return to our sources, and such meetings as that of experts at Gentinnes in August 1983 and of the Constitutions Commission at Carcavelos, have contributed to a sort of accord reflected in the Draft of the new Constitutions: "The Holy Spirit has consecrated us in a decisive way to the apostolate. Though from different cultures, we render this service while living together as brothers and practising the evangelical counsels" (No. 3).

Fr. Libermann's inspiration is manifest here. For him, the Spiritan is first and foremost an apostle. This apostolic life is "that life of love and holiness which the Son of God led on earth to save and sanctify men, and by which he continually sacrificed himself to the glory of the Father for the salvation of the world" (ND II, 290). Expressing in this way the essence of apostolic life, Libermann places religious life in the same line: it is a way of living the fulness of apostolic life. And so community life also takes on an apostolic aim; it is necessary for the good of the apostolate and the sanctification of the members of the Congregation – without which their apostolate would not bear fruit.

In this time of preparation of the new Constitutions and of re-foundation, we recommend: an effort to resolve the ambiguities concerning our Spiritan vocation in its essential aspects, and to achieve unity in our life, with Mission as its aim; acceptance of the challenge to be missionary in all the stages of our life, whether we are young or old, in good health or bad, assigned to our Province or to a mission abroad; an examination of our apostolic life to see if we are aiming at the essential, as did Libermann – not taking refuge in being 'religious' to avoid being 'missionary', or on the other hand sacrificing religious and community life to apostolic activity, which would thus be deprived of the source of its fecundity.

Renewing our ideal Criteria

Every institute shows in the course of time a tendency to grow old in its ideal and fall away from it. And today there are so many developments and new situations to be faced that it is not always easy to go back to the meaning of one's original particular vocation. Yet this is an indispensable task if we are to play our part in today's mission and that of tomorrow.

Noting, on the one hand, a certain aging in the Congregation's ideal and, on the other, signs of renewal in our particular vocation, we recommend:

- Recalling and clarifying the special characteristics of our vocation within the Church's mission, characteristics which are also our criteria for engagement. The Draft of the Constitutions defines them as follows: "We dedicate ourselves to the evangelization of the poor. We offer ourselves for tasks for which the Church has difficulty in finding workers. We go to peoples and individuals whose needs are greatest, or who are oppressed. We preach the Gospel message among those who have not heard it, or who have scarcely heard it. God calls us to share the lives of the poor among whom we work" (No. 4). Check these criteria.
- Renewing oneself according to this ideal and intensifying the movements already perceived in the Congregation "towards the periphery" and "towards greater universality". These movements should be strengthened as we try to interpret the above criteria in the context of the world today. You will find the paths of this renewal in I/D No. 34, pp. 2-3, "...on the road to the future".

Evangelizing the poor Justice and Peace

Renewal of our particular vocation, and re-foundation in accordance with the needs of our time, will take place especially through evangelization of the poor. The "cry of the poor" is making itself more strongly heard among us, for the needs of the poor are growing. The last General Chapter made a strong appeal for us to give greater attention to those who are oppressed, exploited, powerless, and wounded in their basic human rights, for "social analysis reveals the extent and even the universality of oppression" (Sedos Seminar, 1981). As we listen to the world about us, this "cry of the poor" calls us to certain conversions:

- Welcoming the General Chapter's stress on work for those who are oppressed and exploited.
- Considering Justice and Peace as one of our essential criteria and among the special aims of the Congregation.
- Seeing evangelization as "integral liberation".

The Draft of the new Constitutions puts it as follows: "We are witnesses to a new age. The Spirit of God inspires us to prophetic action for justice, and to be wholeheartedly involved in freeing all human beings. This demands ongoing conversion on our part – listening to the cry of the poor" (No. 5).

The reinterpretation of the word 'poor' with the accent on Justice and Peace calls us to conversions not only in our commitments but also in our attitudes:

- Justice and Peace is basically the dream of the coming of the Kingdom of God.
- We must not hide our eyes from the misery about us, but look at the world from the point of view of the oppressed, of those who suffer injustice. We should change our viewpoint.
- Commitment to Justice and Peace means bringing the themes of social and collective misery also into our prayer. These issues must find a place at the heart of our spiritual life.
- Justice and peace is "a new way of seeing, which leads us necessarily to a new way of life and of action".

The "other Church" being born Promise of a new missionary era

In response to a world in transformation, the Vatican Council launched a renewal in the Church which is far from being complete. As we look at the prospects that have been opened up and what has already been achieved in many local Churches, we can see the beginnings of a new missionary drive. What are the points that should be stressed today if we are to play our part in this "other Church" that is being born and in this "new missionary era"?

The Draft of the Constitutions (in Chapter One, which gives the main lines of our Spiritan vocation) says: "We work at the birth of Christian communities and Churches which, deeply rooted in the local culture, are fully responsible for their own development and growth" (No. 6). These words reflect what one might think of as a 'new capticle' of the missionary,

inspired by the Council. Some stanzas of this canticle might include the following:

- We are working for a Church, the People of God, which will be entirely missionary. At the service of the local Churches, we try: to create small Christian communities, to develop ministries and services, to train leaders, and to promote priestly, religious and missionary vocations. We work for the development of "shared mission", which will hasten the growth of the Churches and free us for other calls.
- We are working for the *coresponsibility* of all the Churches in the universal mission. We foresee a day when young Churches and old will jointly share the task of bringing the gospel to the whole world. We are entering the age of mission in all continents, "from everywhere to everywhere", with dialogue, sharing and mutual help between Churches. Having our part to play in this "care of all the Churches", we make our contribution to the future by opening up to the universal mission, paying attention to the Churches that are most in need, promoting contact between Churches, and through our Foundations and young Provinces.
- We are working for a Church that will undertake a new exodus to speak to "the whole person and to all persons". We will take part in this exodus by intensifying our movement "towards the periphery". We dream of a new "progress of the Word", making itself heard among the chosen ones of the Kingdom: the poor, the abandoned and the oppressed.
- We will take the roads recognized by the important Sedos Seminar of 1981 as the *main directions* in mission today, namely proclamation, inculturation, dialogue and liberation. We realize that these roads are still largely to be built, and we must take into account the presence of the Spirit even before proclamation, the salvific values in the various cultures and non-Christian religions, and religious liberty.

At the heart of apostolic life An essential step

So far we have indicated several roads to be followed and conversions to be undertaken in the renewal of our apostolic life, taking into account the circumstances of the world today and our own experience. We come now to the heart of this renewal, to its essence, namely personal and community conversion. In the present process of re-foundation, we think we can discern the privileged moments of this call (cf. p. 1 and I/Ds 34 and 35).

We hope that our discernment is correct. We have learnt from various sources that it is necessary to pass through this stage. Studies on the renewal of institutes consider it decisive. In the light of faith, times of trial and change become times of personal and community conversion – important periods during which new projects are formed. The saints and prophets bear witness to this. It was in the crucible of suffering at Rennes that Libermann underwent his 'second conversion' and formed his missionary project. It was at the time of the Babylonian exile that the People of God turned towards the Lord and attained the universal outlook that is expressed in Deutero-Isaiah.

Encouraged by this faith and by the growing signs among us of personal and community renewal, we believe that we are all invited to turn more resolutely to the Lord and allow ourselves to be possessed by him.

Possessed by the Lord Personal conversion

We believe that all the developments and conversions mentioned above, and the trials and stresses of the past twenty years, reveal in the end God's intention for us: to lead us to him so that we allow ourselves to be possessed by him. To renew our apostolic life, in the new world and Church that are being born, the Lord wants us to take the shortest way, the way of intimacy with him. This was how he dealt with the saints, the prophets and the great missionaries. If we are God's intimates, we shall see things as he sees them and hear calls as he hears them, especially the cry of the poor. And we shall be able to answer them "in the strength of the Spirit".

"If today you hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your heart" (Ps. 94). No one is alone. God's grace is at work in many of our confreres to lead them to the decisive step of a 'second conversion'. Each one will contribute, for his part, to the renewal and conversion of the Congregation as a whole. On this will depend its worthiness to be chosen again by God for tomorrow's mission.

Personal conversion concerns especially those of the 'second age', between 45 and 60. At some point in this period of their life, many find themselves at a crossroads: their initial choices, values and dreams have been subjected to experience; they have realized their limitations and weakness and have suffered setbacks; they may have found it difficult to adapt to change. They are now faced with either a sort of resignation or with a decisive step forward, a 'second conversion'. This consists in giving oneself totally to the Lord, in finding a new wholeness of life, in renewing one's fundamental choices and discovering anew one's vocation. As the majority of our confreres are in this period of their life, the renewal of the Congregation will depend largely on them.

A priority Community renewal

While noting the efforts that have been made towards renewing community life, we must recognize a certain sluggishness in this area. We have allowed ourselves to become too dispersed and perhaps we do not really see why we ought to live in community. We have produced fine texts in our Chapters but without much effect on our lives.

It would be necessary to reinterpret Libermann's inspiration in today's context. For him, let us repeat, community life takes on an *apostolic aim*; it is necessary for the good of the apostolate, and for the sanctification of the confreres, without which their apostolate would not be fruitful. The Draft of the new Constitutions, in Chapter 3, follows this line.

In order to promote community life, the 1980 Chapter asked that community renewal should be one of the most important priorities and that a study of it should be made at the level of the Congregation as a whole. This study is being made, with the aim of finding concrete ways to promote renewal.

We recommend in particular: that the motivation for community life be reflected on; that the aim should be apostolic communities; that each community chould draw up its community 'project' or under-

taking, as is already being done in some circumscriptions (cf. Draft, No. 61.1).

Finally, let us stress that personal and community renewal are interdependent. Without personal conversion thare can be no community conversion.

"New spirituality" Integrated religious life

We have suggested, in these pages, various changes and steps to be taken if we are to play our part in the changing world and Church, which herald a new missionary era. It will be difficult for us to make the necessary conversions unless we renew our spiritual and religious life. We will limit ourselves here to a few important aspects of this vast subject:

- There is talk today of a "new spirituality". Usually this means a spirituality shaped by, and integrating, concrete experience and new situations especially 'frontier situations' or situations of conflict, tension and oppression. The intuition seems a just one; we are called to play our part in the search for a new type of spirituality and religious life that is influenced by the realities of our apostolic life and especially by the frontier situations in which we are engaged.
- On this point too, we should take Libermann's inspiration and reinterpret it for today. Apostolic life is essentially "that life of love and holiness which the Son of God led on earth". Religious life is the way that leads us to live our apostolic life fully, and is shaped by our apostolic life. If we have already been invited to be converted to the 'essential', there remains the task of integrating our religious and apostolic life.
- We would like to encourage the ongoing research on Spiritan spirituality. We have the good fortune to have in one of our Founders, Fr. Libermann, someone who, in the opinion of experts, developed an original spirituality. The Draft of the Constitutions reflects some aspects of this, especially in what concerns the Holy Spirit.

Re-foundation Second conversion

Considering all the calls to conversion that we have mentioned in this I/D, it would not be wrong to speak in terms of a re-foundation – especially as in many of the areas we are only at the beginning of the transformation. We think, for example, of the impact that the young Provinces and Foundations will have on the Congregation, through their inculturation of the Spiritan charism, the participation of the Southern Hemisphere in mission, and the diversification of the Spiritan family in its membership and commitments. Like the world and the Church, the Congregation too is, and should be, engaged in a movement towards that "other Congregation".

We live in hope, as we watch the signs of a new start and the movement towards renewal. As it develops, in the various ways that we have mentioned, it can become a true 'second conversion' of the Congregation, similar to that of a person. What is at stake is important, for the 'second conversion' of the Spiritan family as a whole bears much promise for the future

I/D 37

THE GENERALATE TEAM

December 1984

The Spirit of God inspires us to prophetic action for justice

(Draft of new Rules and Constitutions, no. 5)

"When they came to take the Communists, I remained silent, for I was not a Communist. When they came to take the Jews, I remained silent, for I was not a Jew. When they came to take the workers, I remained silent, for I was not a worker. When they came to take the intellectuals, I remained silent, for I was not an intellectual. But when they came to take me, there was no one left to speak up".

Martin Niemöller

The cry of the silent: Spiritan testimonies

(We withhold the names in order to protect our confreres)

"I was returning home from a mission outstation, taking with me as usual in the car some people coming home or visiting friends. Among them was a mother of four, a good Christian woman who tried to be helpful in her neighbourhood as much as she could. When I left her off, I saw her make her way to a little path. Next day I was called to bury her. She had been shot dead because she took a short-cut that trespassed on a local estate. Everyone knew who murdered her, but no one dared to denounce him. She had been killed because she was black; everyone was afraid to accuse a white man. Myself included!"

"My parish is so large that we can visit the outstations only once a month. But they are well organized, and the people celebrate a Sunday service on their own: they come together, have a celebration of the Word and receive Holy Communion. The leaders are elected by the community, and after a suitable time of preparation they are installed by the bishop for a period of two years. José was one of these community leaders — young, dynamic, married with two children and his wife expecting their third. The community gathered around him, not only for the Sunday service, but also when there were problems, which for them always meant difficulties with the big landowner. The latter behaved as he liked and grazed his cattle anywhere, so that they often broke into the plots of the small farmers. These did their best to defend

themselves, with the community leader at their head. José was coldbloodedly assassinated by hired killers, 'pistoleiros', as they are called here. The excuse was that he had been drunk and had attacked them. It is always the same story. Everyone knew that José on principle never touched alcohol. The 'pistoleiros' are still on the landowner's estate. There were no arrests. The little group of peasants are intimidated and speak of moving away. Thus the big landowner's plan will have succeeded: to acquire their land.

"This is not an isolated case. We are always coming across such things — oppression, hunger, violent death. Can anything be done? The theology we learnt in Europe does not go far. You cannot go on consoling people, telling them that evil is a consequence of sin. That abstract formula will do until the evil strikes you directly yourself. But here it is you yourself who are the victim, and you know the causes of the evil but can do nothing to change them."

"I am back for the past two weeks. It is amazing how freshly one feels pained at the situation again, even after a short absence. There is crushing inflation. You wonder how the people survive on their minimal salary — jokingly we call it the 'economic miracle'. Naturally the all-powerful dollar plays a large part in it. Everyone knows the country is insolvent, but why then is it not declared bankrupt? It would spell an end to help from abroad, it is true, but

it would allow for clear precise planning and on-thespot decisions for the future. While I was on leave I was hurt by the fact that people had doubts about our presence here. Even when I spoke of my own work and situation, people were slow to believe me, even my own family. It was the most painful experience of my vacation."

"The attitude of those who will not believe how much our people are suffering from a war that was imposed on us from outside and will not go away is almost criminal. Have we no right to real independence, autonomy, freedom, self-determination? We de not need your money or your arms, we need peace. What we need is to be able to take our destiny into our own hands, to decide our own future. The great powers and their satellites have a duty to free our country from this shipwreck and self-destruction. Our country is rich in mineral and natural resources. We are capable of providing for our own needs. This war imposed on us by the great powers is a criminal enterprise that cries to heaven; they condemn us to slavery and annihilation. Help us to put an end to this war."

Pope Paul VI's program

"If you want peace, seek for justice"

The theme of 'Justice and Peace', the insistent call of the Church to all people of good will to commit themselves to working for justice, is still quite new. It is too recent to have penetrated the consciences of all confreres, or to have found its place in formation programs of theology or religious life. The principal events and documents on the subject are as follows:

7 December 1965, the last day of Vatican II: promulgation of the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. This constitution indicated a radical change from pre-Council thinking. The very old notion of the Church as the People of God was reintegrated into theology, and the dichotomy of pastoral and social work was surmounted. Human beings came to be considered in the wholeness of their being.

January 1967: Pope Paul VI set up the Pontifical Commission 'Justice and Peace', which received its definitive mandate in 1976. In the encyclical Populorum Progressio, promulgated in March 1967, the Pope indicated why he had set up the Commission: "Wishing to respond to the Council's desire, we considered it our duty to create a pontifical commission that would make known to all the People of God the role the present moment is offering them, to do what they can for social justice among the nations" (no. 5). In this same encyclical the Pope clearly describes the link between Christian faith and responsibility for the development of peoples.

In his apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, addressed to Cardinal Roy, President of the Pontifical Commission 'Justice and Peace', Pope Paul removes all doubt: Christians are to collaborate actively "for social, political and economic changes" (no. 4).

In 1971, over 200 bishops, drawn from all countries, met in Synod in Rome to study, among other things, justice in the world. "The mission of preaching the gospel," they said, "demands in our day radical commitment for the integral liberation of all human beings" (Synod's final document).

1975: The apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntian-di*, summing up the 1974 Synod on evangelization, gives a mandate to missionaries especially: the liberation of the whole person is an integral part of the good news.

It is no exaggeration to say that concern for justice in the world was a central preoccupation of Pope

Paul VI. He succeeded in integrating, firmly and coherently, the new mentality of Vatican II into the guiding principles of his pontificate, and he tried to get all the members of the Church interested.

1980: The General Chapter dealt with this theme and gave it long consideration. Its deliberations are set forth in the 'Justice and Peace' section of Spiritan Life, nos. 69-84. They call all confreres to a radical conversion and give a mandate to the General Council "to make animation in the area of Justice and Peace a primary focus of its ministry" (SL, 83).

Repercussions in the local Churches

In 1969 and 1979 the bishops of Latin America met at Medellín and Puebla, respectively, to consider the Church's role. The "preferential option for the poor" was the main decision at Medellín and constituted the first important step in implementing the decisions of Vatican II in the sub-continent. That option was renewed and strengthened at Puebla. Thus Medellín was a historic moment for Latin America, in which the Church as such made up its mind to be no longer a Church of the rich. In the midst of these huge masses of poor people bereft of rights, it became the advocate of political and economic justice, publicly acknowledging that it had itself been sinfully culpable and partially responsible for social and structural evils.

The bishops of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), at the end of their general assembly in Yaounde in 1981, addressed the exhortation Justice and Evangelization in Africa to all apostolic workers. "Whatever the regime under which they live and work, apostolic workers must bear witness that Jesus Christ loves all people and has special care for the poorest and weakest" (30). We must "realize the need to know about the discussions on a new ordering of relationships between nations — political, economic, monetary, cultural — and on the free flow of information. Our Christian communities must not remain unaware of discussions so important that they will affect our life and pastoral activity" (32).

Likewise we may mention the statements on peace of several episcopal conferences, and statements on various concrete situations for instance,

those of the episcopal conference of South Africa, whose president, the courageous Archbishop Hurley of Durban, takes a clear stand on the apartheid question; and that of the episcopal conference of the Uni-

ted States on nuclear arms. The latter conference has also been preparing a position paper on the capitalist system and the consequences of the economy of multinationals.

To give witness to the justice of the Kingdom

(Draft of new Rules and Constitutions, no. 36)

By the issue 'Justice and Peace' we do not mean what are usually called works of Christian charity. This is not to make a value judgement but only to define terms. Both are necessary obligations, but each is a fundamentally different reality from the other. Work for justice and peace is not something one may accomplish side by side with ordinary tasks as an extra on the timetable. What is it? It is an effort to procure rights for those without rights, a home for refugees, work and a fair wage for the jobless, food for the hungry and thirsty. It is a denunciation of the unjust and sinful structures of society, and an attempt to transform them in union with all people of goodwill. Is this a utopian dream or simply the good news of Jesus Christ?

Justice and peace are grounded in Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God. This is not just an otherworldly and spiritual reality but the Kingdom which is already being realized. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, and to proclaim the Lord's year of favour" (Lk 4:18-19). The enterprise relies on faith, on the conviction that the Gospel values, the moral teachings of Jesus, are feasible for all peoples and can have a meaning in every form of society and in every age.

The place for this to happen is the community of Jesus. Jesus neither wrote nor taught a course of social doctrine, but he gathered disciples around him into a community which is a model for every community. The members lived by new norms of sociability, in clear contradiction to those of the world, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles; for example, poverty ("they sold all their goods"), eliminating social distinctions (Jesus told his disciples that the first among them should be the servants of all). What is at issue is a society without oppression or violence, as we see it portrayed in the Sermon on the Mount. Most especially, Jesus declined to have recourse to violence in the face of death. Justice, in the long run, aims at fulfilling this message.

"Grant to us, O Lord, a heart renewed"

The task presupposes conversion

1. We need a new outlook on the world.

Whoever wants to work for justice and peace must change the point of view from which he sees the world and its conditions: the oppressed and marginalized, prisoners and the persecuted, today's blind and sick. We need Jesus' outlook in the Capharnaum synagogue, as given by St. Luke, where, filled

with the Holy Spirit, he announced the mandate he had from his Father. To change one's point of view means to see the world, to recognize its needs, with the eyes of the poor and oppressed and all those who suffer injustice; to try to analyse their condition from their point of view, with their eyes; for only thus will it be possible to recognize the relevance of the values of the Kingdom of God and put them into practice. Governments, industrial complexes, the mass media and institutions cannot adopt this point of view, for they must follow the laws and values of this world, which are not those of the Kingdom. Their values are power, self interest, gain, advantage.

Our task is to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our task is a prophetic one, since it will lead us towards the oppressed and marginalized. This will place us in a special position with regard to the institutional system. We cannot allow ourselves to be caught up in it. On the contrary, we must be free to challenge it and call upon it to open itself to God's Kingdom.

2. The second presupposition follows from the first. We are bound to change our point of view in the light of Christ's message about the Kingdom of God. Whoever wants to work for justice and peace must discover new sources of spiritual energy, new ways of praying and meditating.

As our new point of view will give us a new interpretation of the world, so it will furnish us with a new way of meeting and knowing God. Side by side with the usual individual relationships with God, social and community relationships will come to the fore. The object of our prayer will become the social conflicts that the poor live with all the time, the concrete experience of oppression, powerlessness in the face of crushing social structures. Contemplation will not be simply an act of personal union with God but an experience of God through situations of poverty and misery, a meeting with the suffering Servant of God in our neighbour. The Bible will be a fresh experience speaking to us more concretely: the call God addresses to his people, to his community. Charity, at the heart of the Christian message, will be not only a fine concept for the individual but will widen to embrace the community, the whole people and even international relationships.

This must form part of the foundations of our spirituality. And perhaps some day an inspired confrere may arise who will show us how Fr. Libermann's intuition of 'practical union' can help us to live up to our vocation in these situations of injustice and violence that are becoming ever more frequent. Many of us still find it hard to separate this from its context of French religious terminology of the 19th century. But it would indeed be a pearl of great price for which much also could be sold.

3. The third presupposition is a new understanding of our life.

A new outlook and a new spirituality will necessarily lead to a new way of living and acting. "The poor evangelize us." We will become more acutely sensitive about the goods we possess and how we use them. This has been called a simpler lifestyle and we have often been encouraged to adopt it. A change in our way of living may be a sign of a genuine renewal, but it will remain an external sign unless another change precedes it — that of our heart, drawing us to the poor.

Libermann's sons, advocates and defenders of the oppressed

We are called to conversion. This conversion will concern not only our mind and interior disposition but, in the biblical sense of the word, it will call for a turning-about, a 'metanoia', a visible, noticeable change of behaviour. The Church calls us to this conversion, which is in point of fact a part of the 'aggiornamento' willed by Vatican II.

Would it be an exaggeration to say that in this call to conversion we touch on a central point of our charism? From childhood Libermann lived the ghetto experience in depth. He was part of a minority in the bosom of society. Thanks to the thoroughness of his father's faith, he was also part of a minority in the bosom of his race and religion. From early on, he knew what it was to be without rights, rejected and marginalized. At Metz he experienced rootlessness, and to this was added the feeling of being abandoned by God. We can imagine what it meant to him then, in his little attic in Paris, when it dawned on him that he was not rejected by God, when he became convinced that God loved him and was his Father, as he was Father of all. This recognition gave Libermann a base, a community where he was accepted, in which he had rights, of which he was a full member. He learnt that God's love not only has effects in the soul of each person but that it transforms and concretely determines relationships between human beings. This love, according to Christ's message, gives rights, a fatherland, work, in a word, all that is required by human dignity. The message of the universality of God's love, and its accomplishment, determine the living community of human beings.

As a result of his fundamental experience he would later give his missionaries this mandate: "You are the advocates and defenders of the oppressed". If you bring them the Father's love you will also be bringing them a new fatherland, a new community, in which they will have rights and where they will be welcomed and accepted. For the Father's love brings tangible changes into the human community.

This call is still relevant, for "the present world situation is one of urgency; delay may be catastrophic" (SL, 74). God's Spirit impels us to prophetic commitment on behalf of justice. We live out this commitment according to Libermann's call and inheritance wherever, after community discernment, we notice oppression and exploitation.

Conversion is not the result of long, extended and reasoned reflections. Nor is it the result of discussions meant to convince an adversary. Conversion is a grace, a gift accorded to us when "we retire into the desert", "when we fast and pray", when we pray uninterruptedly to obtain it, when we leave ourselves open to the Spirit in humility, when we give him entry and allow ourselves to be led where he wills. Just now, in this time of our renewal, when we are preparing to re-write our Rule, we need this openness to the Spirit, we need to pray to have the Spirit, so that he may show the way, this way which he revealed to Libermann and which we wish to rediscover for ourselves and for the Spiritans of tomorrow.

For this we need saints and prophets:

- who are brave enough to stand out from the ranks, to go into the desert, to listen to the voice of God there and to call the Church and the Congregation to the ways of God;
- who are not afraid of being treated by the powerful ones of this world as enemies of the nation or as revolutionaries, and of being condemned to prison or even death;
- who are not discouraged if they are reprimanded, condemned or rejected by certain structures and even by their own confreres.

WHOEVER DECIDES TO FOLLOW CHRIST MUST BE PREPARED TO SHARE HIS FATE.

The option for the poor

"We are not a church of geniuses who suddenly decided to opt for the poor – the option came from pure necessity: 85% of our population is oppressed and its oppression clearly showed us that we live in a social and economic system of injustice. In Medellín we verbalized our conviction that this injustice is not occasional but that it is institutionalized in what we call social sin... The option for the poor touches the very heart of the social system and incites the anger of all those who have benefited from an unjust economy... Another consequence of this option for the poor is the transformation of the Church... If you ask me what has changed, I have to say: everything! Our pastoral planning is different, decisions are made in assemblies of all the members of the Church. Our religious education has changed, the way of preaching the Gospel has changed. Our liturgy is renewed – it is deeper, it comes from the heart of the people, it celebrates their victories and their defeats. Our theology has been renewed, our seminaries are different. And yes, our bishops tell wonderful stories of how they were before they made their options for the poor!"

Cardinal Evaristo Arns of São Paulo, Brazil, speaking to the Centre of Concern, Washington, 1981.

"Adapt yourselves to them as servants"

(Libermann, ND X, p. 330)

Inculturation is becoming a preoccupation. It keeps cropping up – but without ever a clear definition. It is fast becoming a catchall for any number of sundry agendas. It takes on different tints depending on the cultural or ideological matrix in which it is used. Nevertheless, to dismiss it as transitory or inconsequential would be disastrous. It is a worrying issue in local Churches, and a challenge to missionary institutes.

The dimensions of the inculturation question demonstrate that we are now in an age of a new emphasis on mission. We are living in a time of major transition. Karl Rahner called this age the third period in his tripartite division of the epochs in Church history. It is the period when the Church is becoming really, not just theoretically, in fact, not just in word, Catholic; when the Christian faith is finding expression in a world where western culture and thought-forms no longer have hegemony. *Proclamation, dialogue, inculturation* and *liberation* (Sedos Seminar 1981, Grottaferrata, Rome) – these four key words are used today to delineate the essence of this age of new emphasis on mission.

However, there are close links existing among these four principal activities in the actual missionary practice of the Church. Inculturation is generally regarded as an African issue, for the simple reason that today we are able to see that "Christianity should be Africanized" (Bishop Sarpong of Kumasi, Ghana). Or, as Bühlmann puts it, "having Christianized Africa, we now have to Africanize Christianity in Africa" (W. Bühlmann: Forward, Church!, St. Paul Publications, 1977, p. 49).

Africanization, Asianization, Latin Americanization, Europeanization and Oceanization of Christianity challenge us Spiritans today. We are called to be catalysts or avenues of this process. To achieve this we must be willing to open ourselves voluntarily and positively to the culture or cultures of the people among whom we live and work. "The path of culture is the path of man" (Pope John Paul II, Lagos, to Bishops). This openness to culture or cultures was a fact of life in the days of the Apostles (Acts 15). The Gospel was proclaimed and the faith was lived successively in different cultural contexts: Palestinian-Aramaic, Diaspora, Hellenistic, etc. At the Areopagus of Athens, Paul adopts the values of Greek religiosity to express some basic aspects of the Christian mystery.

He makes of the altar dedicated by the Greeks to unknown gods, an altar "to the unknown God" (Acts 17:23). Saints Cyril and Methodius are regarded as pioneers of the use of the vernacular in the liturgy and as inventors of the Glagolitic (Cyrillic) alphabet. This enabled them to insert the Christian message into the Slavonic culture. In Spiritan history examples abound of confreres who had profound knowledge of their host cultures, and their monumental success (often unsung) accrued from this.

Culture

The Congregation is not just international. It is intercultural as well. Our meetings, councils, seminars, congresses and commissions bring to sharp relief our diversity of cultures. This raises problems in questions of formulations that are acceptable to all in our documents. This is evident in issues like Community Life and Formation. The projected revision of our Rules and Constitutions, which should accommodate and reflect our multicultural membership, proved knotty at the 1983-84 Carcavelos meeting. The acid test of this project will be the attention it pays to our multifaceted culture.

What is culture? It is needless to rehearse here the far-reaching debate on this topic which began practically with the rise of anthropological theory in the late 19th century and has continued ever since. In this I/D we take culture proper as: "the set of meanings, values and patterns which underlie the perceptible phenomena of a concrete society" (Fr. M. Azevedo, S.J.). Culture is the most profound code to reveal a human, social group and to make it comprehensible. It is the whole range of human achievement within which we live. It is the human setting of our lives (M. de Verteuil). Some anthropologists call it the 'artificial environment' as distinct from the natural environment.

The notion of 'culture' as it is understood by sociologists and anthropologists is a relatively new one. The Church describes it as a means of expression, of communication and of conservation of great spiritual experiences (Gaudium et Spes, 53). Pope Paul VI spoke of the great variety "of ways of praying, of loving, of looking at life and the world, which distinguishes this or that human gathering". Our culture shapes both our acting and our thinking (Kraft).

Culture is a factor that faces missionaries today. The prevailing mode of evangelization and Church development is one of finding Christ in the situation rather than concentrating on bringing Christ into the situation. The study of culture is necessary. Otherwise one runs the risk of introducing and maintaining Christianity as an alien body in the culture. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* points out that the force and effectiveness of the missionary's apostolate is measured in the light of knowledge of the culture of the people (no. 63).

Inculturation

To know the culture or be part of a given culture smooths the path of inculturation. The notion of inculturation as the dynamic relation between the Christian message and culture or cultures is usually advanced. Culture is attended to in so far as it helps with the transmission of the message. message can be heard only if spoken in the accents of the hearers. "We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11). Hence the speakers must first conform themselves to the contours of the hearers' world or to the reality in which the hearers find themselves before enacting the event of the Word. In this, inculturation is not just a step that might be helpful in a deeper understanding of the Gospel; it is imperative in order that the event of the Word may take place at all. What this means is that God has chosen to reveal himself fully to us only when his Word is incarnated in concrete historical and social circumstances. When we try to escape that reality in our evangelization, we are like a message full of static noise, not yet tuned exactly on a cultural receiver (R. Schreiter).

Ad Gentes stresses that the Church borrows from the customs, traditions, wisdom, learning, arts and sciences of peoples all the things which can contribute to the glory of the Creator (no. 22). Inculturation is an option of prime importance for Africa, indeed for the whole Church, because the need for it is universal. There is need of a new and continuous inculturation of the faith everywhere. It is triumphalistic to think that only the local Churches of the Southern Hemisphere need inculturation. It is a dangerous error to deny that the Churches of the Northern Hemisphere need a re-inculturation of the faith. However, since the map of our presence throughout the globe tilts more to the South, inculturation for us concerns inserting Christianity more profoundly into the Southern Hemisphere reality. For evangelization has not yet penetrated the depths of its cultures. This puts in perspective Pope John Paul II's address to the Bishops of Cameroon on their ad limina visit (November 1982): "In particular, a second stage remains, that of evangelization of the culture in depth, the African cultures, customs and mentality, so that the Church gradually acquires its African features on the basis of the one foundation, Jesus It is clear from this papal advice that Christology is at the very heart of any theology of inculturation. There is little wonder then that the Pope affirmed that "not only is Christianity relevant to Africa, but Christ, in his members, is himself African" (Pope John Paul II, 1980, in Nairobi to Kenyan Bishops).

With these in view, we can now venture to answer the question: what is inculturation? It is "the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation), but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about 'a new creation'" (Fr. P. Arrupe, S.J.).

In other words, we understand by the term that effort which the Church makes to present the message and values of the Gospel by embodying them in expressions that are characteristic to each culture, in such a way that the faith and Christian experience of each local Church is imbued, as intimately and deeply as possible, in its own cultural context. This process enables the Christian message to penetrate that culture, to take on local colour, to cease being exotic and to become more intelligible. It simply brings the reality of Christ closer to a people's reality.

Libermannian Perspective

Fr. Libermann never went to the missions but he had an admirable intuition. He gave very judicious instructions to his missionaries in situ. He insisted on the planting of local Churches that were truly and authentically rooted in the local people. He hoped that "all missionaries will work seriously to establish solidly based Churches in foreign mission countries and that hereafter they will employ every valid means for putting them into the same canonical situation as the Churches of Europe and America" (Letter of 7 Jan. 1846, ND Compléments, p. 68). He considered this a safeguard for the future, for "you are not there for the present but to build for the future". Libermann's insistence on local Churches necessarily implied that there be "from the very beginning... a stable organization indigenous to the ground we have to cultivate" (ND VIII, pp. 242-243). Religion must be "fixed in the native soil, inherent in the earth".

Only one way seems practical: the formation of the native clergy, which is one of the necessary means "whereby the light of the holy Gospel can be widely diffused and the Church solidly established in the countries where we are called to work" (ND X, p. 519). Fr. Libermann termed a Church without local hierarchy and clergy abnormal. In 1846, November 2, he wrote about Haiti: The present situation is abnormal, as long as there is no Haitian bishop with Haitian collaborators, and we "moreover, do not have sufficient knowledge of the spirit and the customs of the country" (ND VIII, p. 337). Incisively, he summed up the situation by saying: "Haiti needs a bishop and clergy who come from the country itself; for this, a seminary is needed" (ND VIII, pp. 340-341).

However, Fr. Libermann did not view the establishment of new local Churches as the sole function of the native clergy. The clergy is not enough. He strongly believed that the laity must be involved as catechists in order "to spread the true doctrine and educate their fellow countrymen in the faith and in Christian living".

Quite obviously, Fr. Libermann never used the word 'inculturation'. But the theological content of this term is present in his writings. If evangelization is to lead to the implantation of the Church in a new region as a self-sustaining Christian community, it must be rooted in the mentality, customs and culture of the people and not in the culture proper to the missionary's home country (Koren). Apropos of this, Libermann wrote to his missionaries with a deep sense of urgency: "Do not judge according to what you have seen in Europe, according to what you have been used to in Europe. Cast Europe aside, its customs and its spirit. Become authentically black so that you may form them as they should be formed, not in a European way, but leave them what is theirs, adapt yourselves to them as servants have to adapt themselves to their masters, their customs, their taste and manners, in order to perfect and sanctify them, to raise them up and transform them slowly and grad-ually into a people of God" (ND IX, p. 330). His revised Rules contain several pages on the way the missionaries should act towards the populations to be evangelized. They should know the character of the people and the geography of the country. They should scrupulously avoid disturbing the habits of the people (as long as they are not opposed to the law of God). They should avoid forming them in the European way of life (ND X, p. 452).

These well-known words cannot help but strike us by their similarity to certain expressions of the Second Vatican Council and of the Synod of 1974, concerning the need for the Church to inculturate itself into each human culture, while leaving to each that which is its own (Ad Gentes, 10; Gaudium et Spes, 44; Final Statement of the Bishops of the 1974 Synod, nos. 2 and 9). The Libermannian concern for solidly founded local Churches indicates that there is no need for the African, Asian, Latin American or Oceanian reality to be replaced by a foreign western form of Christian reality: the need is for the African, Asian, Latin American or Oceanian reality to be interpreted and made complete by the Christian revelation. Christ was semitic by race. This should allow that Christianity in Africa, Asia, Latin America or Oceania be best understood in an African, or Asian, or Latin American or Oceanian dress.

Spiritan Perspective

"We see the importance of a new incarnation of the Word of God, so that this Word may penetrate all cultures" (SL, 50).

In the litany of Spiritan traits, evangelizing skills, sense of physical hard work and dedication to duty should be singled out. Evangelization that spans over two hundred years and includes sixty nations; the multitudes of converts that we have registered; the network of schools and churches that we have built; the formation of local clergy and hierarchy that we considered an option of immense importance and the web of particular Churches that we have established, are eloquent testimonies of Spiritan missionary endeavours. However, in this galaxy of our pre-Vatican II work and achievements, it would be a sad mistake for us to be complacent. If inculturation is something as old as the Church itself, it may be asked why at the present time it engages the attention of the Church with urgency. The last twenty years have seen the emergence of new theological appreciations in ecclesiology, mission and evangelization. now a call to a "paradigm shift" (Kuhn, 1970) or a change of worldview, a shift of perspective. There is a time for everything (Eccl. 3:1-8). We have planted. It is now time to water and nurture what is planted. This is an imperious

Since the 1974 Synod, some African ecclesiastical leaders like Cardinal Malula, Archbishop of Kinshasa, have begun projects whose aim is "to promote the birth of an authentically African local Church... We say pointedly that it is the ultimate objective..." In Latin America, the word is liberation, called normally "insertion among the poor". At the appeal of Pope John XXIII, a considerable number of missionaries was sent to Latin America. They put themselves in contact with the poor, initiated new programs among them, inserted themselves in their slums, shared their life, their lack, their misery, their fears, their hopes. In Asia, it is dialogue. No one can fail to see the importance and the need which this assumes in Asia today. The recent document on The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of other Religions (Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission), issued by the Vatican's Secretariat for Non-Christians, Pentecost 1984, is a useful book for all Spiritans. An I/D on 'Dialogue', illustrated with lived experiences and witness of our confreres, is in the offing.

In the 17th century Propaganda Fide issued definite instructions on mission methodology to missionaries: "Do not regard it as your task, and do not bring any pressure to bear upon the people, to change their manners, customs and uses, unless they are evidently contrary to religion and sound morals... There is no stronger cause for alienation and hate than an attack on local customs, especially when these go back to venerable antiquity. This is more especially the case when an attempt is made to introduce the customs of another people in place of those which have been abolished" (Instructions to Missionaries, issued in 1695 by the Roman Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples). "Accordingly we must devote all our resources and all our efforts to the sedulous evangelization of human culture or rather of the various human cultures. They must be regenerated through contact with the Gospel" (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 20). This is what it means for Christianity to be relevant to them. In this context, the scope of its influence is judged.

To be real catalysts or passageways of inculturation, we need "personal interior inculturation". As men involved in this work, we allow ourselves first of all to be re-evangelized (SL, 50). This necessarily precedes, or at least accompanies, the external task of inculturation. All changes arising from Vatican II, from Evangelii Nuntiandi, from our last three General Chapters and Enlarged General Councils have precisely this objective: to make us effective agents of a genuine inculturation of the Gospel. In theory we admit the necessity of inculturation. But, if we want to let ourselves be caught up in this process, theory is insufficient. We need the "shock" of deep personal experience (Fr. Arrupe). For Spiritans who are called to live in another culture, a rigorous asceticism is required. We have to be assimilated to the

Lord in his 'kenosis'. This self-emptying is a conditio sine qua non because all inculturation presupposes a de-culturation. This is the law of life. This enables us to see things in a very different perspective. Inculturation entails a change of attitude, an altering of values. We are affected by Kenya, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Brazil, Pakistan etc., their people, their cultures. We become attuned to the new one. We do not become Kenyans, Cameroonians, Sierra Leoneans, Brazilians, Pakistanis etc. However, we do become very different Frenchmen, Irishmen, Englishmen, Americans, Nigerians, Tanzanians, Dutchmen, Germans, Portuguese etc. than we were upon our arrival at our places of apostolate. Our values are enhanced. We do not forget who we are but our entrance into a new way of life does have a profound effect. We become a dialogue between our respective cultures and our host peoples

This section would be incomplete without mention of stalwart Spiritans whose insertion into their host peoples launched them into greatness. How many know Laval's place of origin? Very few. The Mauritians were his "children". "Father Laval is a Mauritian, sir," contested a Mauritian taxi-driver. Mauritius pulsates with Father Laval. Canon Coubé said of Father Brottier, "an epic in three melodies": African missionary, military chaplain, father of orphans. The Father of orphans indeed! Father Brottier was fully identified with Auteuil. Some outstanding pioneering missionary bishops: Joseph Shanahan of Southern Nigeria, Mgr. Vogt of Bagamoyo and Cameroon, Mgr. Bessieux of Gabon, and Mgr. Derouet of Loango, Congo, to mention a few, along with missionaries like Fr. Duparquet of Angola, were trail-blazers in evangelization in their respective territories and times. Their theories paved avenues or passageways for inculturation. Schools, formation and engagement of lay personnel and their pastoral zeal gave their missions an effective élan. May we be encouraged by these men!

Foreign Missionaries: Heralds of Inculturation

"He must increase; I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30). This is the norm for the inculturation of Spiritan missionaries. Spiritans should favour the building up of the self-confidence and the development of native values. Our task is evidently to adapt ourselves, to render ourselves sensitive to the values, priorities, wishes, ways of conduct, of communicating, of relating to the other of our host countries. To be well acculturated is the clarion call. The degree of this acculturation aids the extent to which we pave the way for inculturation. For we are solely its heralds. The principal elements for the Spiritan missionary to make possible the achievement of inculturation are sensitivity, which shows itself in learning and really mastering the language of the host people, respect and love. Persevering patience is indispensable. Fulbermann enjoins us to value, respect and love all men, and this with all the sincerity of our hearts, and to behave accordingly (ND II, p. 112).

Inculturation by Indigenous Spiritans

"The Gospel is put into practice by men who are imbued with their own particular culture" (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 20).

Fr. Libermann viewed the formation of native clergy as vital: "If we do not form a native clergy, we shall never succeed in this mission" (ND VI, pp. 121-122, to Fr. Le Vavasseur, 10 March 1844). He wrote to Mother Javouhey on 22 July 1844: "Form a native clergy. It is the most useful thing, the most important... I do not think it is possible to get good results without this." He adds that "the local priests will have the advantage over the Europeans in many aspects of dealing with their compatriots" (ND VI, p. 285). We can therefore distinguish between inculturation by 'expatriates' and inculturation by nationals.

Inculturation is primarily the task of the local Church (Fr. M. Amaladoss). Evangelization of peoples is best carried out by Christians of the same races. This is so because there has to be an entry or insertion into the culture, for the most intimate values can be perceived only from within. No one is more 'inserted' into a people than one who belongs to it by birth and culture. Local people would know how to avoid certain transplants which the cultural soil of the place will reject. Hence the fundamental importance of our young Provinces and Foundations, and the present efforts at regionalism in formation in the Congregation at large. *Spiritan Life* and indeed most Provinces advocate this cultural regionalism or training *in situ* (SL, 111). This process aims at forming people who are secure in their own culture despite the idealism and shortcomings inherent in this policy.

It is regrettable that some of the past generation of non-Euro-American Spiritans tended to be unacculturated. fall between two stools while trying to sit on both. African proverbial bat, they belong neither to the quadruped realm nor to the winged kingdom. For authentic inculturation, this breed of Spiritans runs the same gauntlet of problems as the 'expatriates'. In the same vein, we must abandon the illusion that a Tanzanian (because he originates from the East African region) or a Nigerian (because he is African) who is missioning in Zambia, for example, can effortlessly effect this process. Hence the fundamental role to be played by Spiritans of the culture in question with their intuition, their ability to identify that which best expresses what they are, to pick up what is genuine. Fortunately, in countries where the problem of inculturation is urgent, the Congregation can rely on Spiritans from these areas, since inculturation, now a missionary imperative, is best realized by men who are imbued with their own particular culture (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 20).

The Formation of Spiritans

The contribution which Spiritans can make to this work of inculturation depends, in the long term, on the level of the consciousness for inculturation to which young Spiritans can attain now. The 1980 General Chapter stressed the importance of this awareness during formation. It singled out, among other things, a genuine preparation for encounter with other cultures by study of the human and social sciences and some practical notions of linguistics (SL, 173). Language is vitally important. "This is a question which calls for no small measure of prudence, because evangelization will lose much of its power and efficacy if it does not take into consideration the people to whom it is addressed, if it does not make use of their language, their signs and their symbols" (Evan. Nunt., 63). Apropos of internationality, Spiritan Life insists that during the time of formation, study of another language is required of candidates (SL, 204). The Draft of New Rules and Constitutions, 1984, if it survives the scrutiny of the 1986 General Chapter, points out that we integrate ourselves into the host culture through learning the language (no. 32).

The missionary can reach the heart of his people and gain their confidence only if he can sit down and speak with them. "Interpreters are no substitute. It is not possible to understand what is in the mind of other people without understanding their language, and without understanding their language it is impossible to be sure that they understand what is in our minds." To assure this, Fr. Simon E. Smith, S.J., adopts a ruthless position. "Ability to speak the language of the host people," he says, "is an absolutely indispensable element of inculturation. If the missionary is not gifted with this talent, he should not be sent... If, after several years in the mission country or region, it is obvious

that he cannot learn the language, he should be recalled to his home country" (The Future of Mission, Sedos Bulletin, 1 Nov. 1983, p. 304). On the other hand, St. Ignatius orders that penances be given to those who do not learn the local language (To the Superiors of the Society, Rome, 1 Jan. 1556).

It has to be pointed out that creditable achievements have been made by Spiritans with minimal knowledge of the local language. It can be argued that someone can have perfect knowledge of the language and yet be a failure apostolically. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that we achieve more by knowing the language. It is sheer courtesy to our host people. Our confreres who live and work in Frenchspeaking territories, in the Kiswahili-speaking regions, in Chichewa, Tonga and Shona tribes and in Portuguese-speaking countries, find that language is an absolute in their aposto-The monumental Swahili-French Dictionary, which is still regarded as a standard work even today, was produced by a Spiritan, the legendary Fr. C. Sacleux. Fr. Alphons Loogman's *Swahili Grammar* remains a household book in East Africa. Last year, Fr. Alphonse Lenselaer of Kongolo District produced a modern Swahili-French Dictionary. In the early '50s, Fr. Bernard J. Kelly published an Igbo Grammar for the language orientation of new missionaries to the This is still valued as an indispensable reference region. book and a model for recent editions. Fr. Leo van Kessel has turned out a seven-volume corpus in Kiswahili on Religious Knowledge for Schools in Tanzania under the aegis of the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference.

These endeavours of the present and past are appreciated. They are approval of the primacy of language in the apostolate. Particular attention and assiduity, therefore, should be shown and developed in the ability to learn languages. Our formation period, the Overseas Training Program and the practice of one or two years of anticipated first appointments are propitious times to introduce our students into the language of the region where they will work. Candidates ought to have the capacity and disposition to achieve this objective, which is of cardinal importance for fostering inculturation. In the missions, Spiritans who are unable to learn the local language, and consequently have no feeling for the 'ethos' and way of life of the local people, will find their ministry unnerving.

Conclusion

An African prelate, Maurice Cardinal Otunga, made a statement in AFER (Feb. 1978) that "African culture possesses seeds that can produce flowers which have never been seen before". This cardinal remark can be applied to all cultures. These "seeds that can produce flowers which have never been seen before" can be found if we build upon the cultures of the peoples being evangelized or evangelize the cultures themselves. This is a high ideal. The Congregation calls us to strive to reach this high ideal with greater intensity. This demands personal and profound convictions about the capital importance of inculturation, for which the Church asks us to be prime movers. A fortiori, we must realize that concern for inculturating, interculturating or contextualizing the Gospel message is not just a side dish but the main course of the meal. Surely, this is a delicate task, but indispensable. It is one of the best services which the Congregation today can render in the cause of evangelization. All of us, sons of Poullart des Places and Libermann, should be conscious of being sent as heralds and agents of a communion that not only gathers together people of our own countries, but brings to unity, while respecting distinct identity, "all God's children scattered far and wide" (Jn. 11:52)

Dialogue

At the frontiers of evangelization

Why?

The testimony of Cardinal Duval, Archbishop of Algiers:

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"What is the meaning of our Christian presence here? Why should the Church be present in this Islamic country? We wish to live, among the men and women of this country, that fraternal brotherhood which is the heart of the Gospel. We would like to overcome the prejudices that Christians may have against Muslims, against Islam, and we want to serve this country which we love and which welcomes us. We want also to provide here in the heart of Islam the lived witness of our faith so that they also may lose their prejudices against us. But there is a still more fundamental motive. It is the right of Christ to be known and loved, to see his saving word brought to all, because it is an invitation to all without exception. We are here – respecting persons and their consciences – without any desire to proselytize".

The Spirit

Dialogue is the concrete way in which we express our faith in the fact that the Holy Spirit is active among us, leading us into all truth. It is the recognition that we meet Christ in one another, a Stranger who is our brother or sister, but whom we have to go out of ourselves to meet. The ultimate theological basis for dialogue is that the Spirit of God is working in the heart of every person, that every human being is a unique manifestation of God in an image and likeness that cannot be duplicated. The Word of God "enlightens every man who comes into this world", as St. John tells us, and if we claim to be "hearers of God's word" we must be ready in all honesty to listen to this word as it comes to us in the life of our brothers and sisters. In the Church today evangelizing, or announcing the Good News, is as much a willingness to listen as a willingness to speak. We cannot address human beings 'unilaterally', for that would be to treat them as objects, not as unique personal subiects.

Attitudes

Dialogue is not a means to gaining something. It along at growth in understanding of the truth, a better

mutual relationship and a deeper 'communion'. Quite clearly the aim of dialogue is not to prove that I am right and you are wrong; nor is its aim to win you to my way of thinking. In dialogue one *explains* with *courage* and *clarity* and *without pretence*, while the other *listens* as sympathetically as possible. Neither party need compromise on basic issues, but both *share*. Dialogue, then, is a style of life, a spirituality, a living out in practice of the meaning of redemption in a glad acceptance of the other. It is not answering people's questions, not telling them what we know. It is much more leading people to make their own free decisions.

Obstacles

The fundamental *religious obstacle* to openness and dialogue has been called the 'Religion of Anxiety'. It is the religion of those who have not found their freedom in the humanness of God, who has shown himself to us in Christ, but who feel anxiety at this God and, to protect themselves against him, cling to the law of fear and repression. As a result they look for eternal support and comfort to things which can give no such support: institutions, rituals, rules, taboos, authorities. They make their opponents into devils. The same idols, laws, images, illusions are kept alive and fostered, and eventually dependence on this kind of routine leads to apathy, fossilizing, lack of openness to the world, spiritual death. One's idols and values become identical with oneself, so that attacks on these are seen as deadly personal dangers, and are resisted with fatal blind aggressiveness.

Those who are ruled by the religion of anxiety love only what is like them, while people who differ from them disturb and upset them, since they increase anxiety. Racial hatred, religious bigotry, persecution all spring from this poisonous root (cf. Jurgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God*).

Pope John Paul II has said: "Dialogue is not an easy thing. Religion itself can be made an instrument and become an excuse for polarization and division. In the current world situation, to engage in dialogue means learning to forgive, since all religious communities can point to possible wrongs suffered through the centuries" (L'Osservatore Romano, 23 March 1004).

The Church

Pope Paul VI's first Encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* (6 Aug. 1964), can be called the charter of dialogue for the Catholic Church. A year after the publication of *Ecclesiam Suam* came the conciliar document *Gaudium et Spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), giving a new image of what the Church stands for in the world. The Vatican II Decree

on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, goes beyond the assertion that the Catholic Church is the true Church, to assert that Jesus, in his Spirit, is at work in the Churches and communities *beyond the visible borders of the Catholic Church*. No Catholic document had ever spoken of non-Catholic Christians in this way. Last year (1984) the Secretariat for Non-Christians gave more precise orientations on Dialogue and Mission in the document *The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of other Religions*.

With other Christian Churches

Since Vatican II most of the great controversial questions between Catholics and Protestants have either been resolved or put in a totally different light. It is very different, however, with fundamentalist sects and the many cults that fuse elements of Christianity with syncretistic ideas. Their lack of structure and clarity, especially in the dogmatic element, makes dialogue with them extremely difficult.

A Questionnaire

As regards what is happening among Christian Churches, the latest information is available in the replies sent by 41 National Ecumenical Commissions to the Questionnaire from the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (July 1984). The questionnaire dealt with aspects of *Ecumenical Formation and Collaboration in the Local Church*, and the replies were presented to the meeting of National Ecumenical Commissions held in Rome from 22-27 April this year (1985). Of relevance here are the replies from some countries where Spiritans work.

In Zaïre there is collaboration with the Protestant Faculty in the training of seminarians. Working together on the translation of the Bible into local languages has had positive results. It is necessary to distinguish in Zaïre between the very few engagés who know what dialogue means and act on it, the very many priests who are compréhensifs (know but do not act) and the large numbers of religious and laity who are incertains, seeing difficulties rather than need. Seen as a widespread problem are the dangers of indifferentism and relativism ("we are all the same really").

In Gambia the Gambian Christian Council met to discuss together the possibilities of dialogue between Christians and Islam. The absence of texts in the local languages and the difficulty of finding time for people to meet together in ecumenical dialogue pose problems. There is, however, a growing positive response to coordinated development, relief and medical activities, especially in the Sahel.

Ghana emphasizes the formative potential of joint ecumenical initiatives taken there, such as chaplaincies, pastoral letters, health projects, an ecumeni-

cal nurses' training school, shared chapel at the main hospital, meetings of the Heads of Churches' Committee of Cooperation, mutual recognition of baptism. Despite these initiatives there are still misunderstandings, even among leaders, and certain continuing signs of lingering interdenominational rivalry.

Zambia has many collaborative structures in medical, educational and refugee work; also some joint pastoral letters have been issued on questions of justice. There is, however, a problem voiced there concerning the mind of the Catholic Church as regards Common Witness: "In many places our policy is to spread the Good News everywhere and to be open to all who approach us. We are not much concerned about making Anglicans, for example, better Anglicans. Our main effort is towards spiritual ecumenism, by making ourselves better Catholics and by offering witness to others".

CELAM, the Conference of Latin American Bishops, reports that everywhere throughout Latin America the vast majority of the people are baptised Catholics and the smaller Churches feel bound to combat Catholicism. Even so, progress is being made through the committed few, although few Church members (Catholic or otherwise) are formed for ecumenical dialogue. In some Latin American countries the fact that quite frequently some members of other Churches are former Catholics is a further problem. In Brazil the CNBB (the Episcopal Conference) took the lead in the formation of the National Council of Christian Churches. Paraguay attributes the lack of interest in ecumenical dialogue to a reaction against the ever growing influence of the sects. The socio-economic aspects of ecumenism are assisted by the 'Foundation to aid Paraguayan Artisans through Marketing', founded by a Redemptorist missionary.

With the Orthodox Churches: Not mentioned in the replies to the SPCU Questionnaire but most deserving of mention here is the work of a group of Spiritans in Gamu Goffa, Ethiopia. Together with some Sisters and lay members they form a pastoral team working and living in a service capacity to the Ethiopian Coptic Orthodox Church. They describe the elements of their pastoral mission as Proclamation, Service and Communion.

With the Non-Christian Religions

Vatican II, in the document *Nostra Aetate* (The Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), signalled a new departure for Catholic thinking about other religions. The document emphasizes the common heritage shared by all religions and the 'rays of

the one truth" that are found in them all. It expands on the awareness of the mystery of God at work in every human heart and community. It exhorts Catholics to "prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and

in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture" (no. 2).

Dialogue with Islam

Islam is of particular import to Spiritans both because of its vigorous growth in many of the countries where we work – and indeed worldwide – and because of the difficulties of entering into dialogue with Mohammedans.

Obstacles. Colonial expansion in the Muslim world is linked for Muslims with the 'mission' of Christianity. The colonial powers imposed their own educational system in many places, and tried to weaken the hold of Islam, as for example in North Africa and Asia. This led to the formation of militant Islamic brotherhoods, the rise of nationalism, and various movements to restore Islam to its former status, culminating in the militant Islamic revival of the 1970s and 1980s. Muslims accused Christians of using money, power, education and medicine to win converts (as in fact Libya and some other Islamic states are doing today). In general Christians treated Muslims as political rivals, and in many cases discriminated against them.

Difficulties in dialogue arise from prejudices on both sides. Most Christians have an over-simplified idea of Islam's 'fatalism' and 'laxity' (e.g. the matter of four wives). On the Islamic side there is the fundamentalist and rigid theology and the view of Jesus as only a man as against our questioning of Mohammed's standing as really a prophet. And always there are the wounds left by centuries of hostility and incomprehension between the religions, as related in the history of the Crusades and 'Holy Wars'.

Possibilities for dialogue with Islam lie in our common biblical heritage, with common prophets such as Abraham and Moses. Jesus is treated with great reverence in the Koran as the greatest prophet after Mohammed. The Koran in Islam finds an analogy in Christianity in the Word of God revealed in Jesus. A good basis for dialogue is found also in the spiritual and ascetical practices of Islam – prayer, fasting, pilgrimages, works of charity – as well as in its fundamental beliefs – God, creation, revelation, God's messengers, the meaning of life as submission to God's will (the essence of Islam!), the final judgement, the strong sense of community. They also honour Mary and at times call on her with devotion (cf. Nostra Aetate, no. 3)

Conditions for Dialogue: (1) True respect for the people, the writings and the beliefs of Islam. (2)

Religions of the World

Christians Muslims Hindus Marxists and	1,000 million 800 million 600 million
'secular religionists' Traditional Chinese Buddhists Animists Other religions Traditional Japanese Jews	500 million 500 million 250 million 200 million 100 million 60 million 15 million

SEDOS, 1 July 1983

Christians must try to heal the wounds of the past and be sensitive to the fears and suspicions of Muslims faced with dialogue. (3) Only by a perseveringly friendly attitude and even by a readiness to keep turning the other cheek will this suspicion and hostility be broken down. (4) A Christian entering into dialogue with Islam must have a deep understanding of his own faith and security in it; insecurity and fear are the greatest obstacles to dialogue.

Dialogue with Hinduism

The conciliar document *Nostra Aetate* affirms that "in Hinduism men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an unspent fruitfulness of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek release from the anguish of our condition through ascetical practices or deep meditation or a loving, trusting flight toward God" (no. 2). In the midst of conflict the Hindu experiences a loving ground to his being; he comes to see he has a goal in life beyond this visible world. Everyday ordinary things are symbols of something deeper. God is heard like a song in all creation, where he reveals himself to those who are reverent and open to that mussic. It is God himself who loves him and will save him. But it is up to man to accept or reject salvation: he has to take the consequences of his choice and deeds.

There are openings for dialogue in the similarities between Hindu and Christian beliefs, e.g., the concept of God's appearance on earth; the concept of grace; sacraments; and similarities between the Christian Trinity and the Hindu ultimate reality.

Spiritans in Dialogue with Non-Christians

Recent reports from Spiritan confreres give some idea of the current situation in countries where the Congregation is present.

In the Gambia Islam is very strongly present and some Christians come to feel that to be a Christian puts them outside the Gambian culture. At the social level relations with Muslims are good, as also are relations with the government. Much of this is attributed to Spiritans' involvement in education over the last quarter of a century, when they conducted the

best schools in the country. While there is no formal dialogue, over the last ten years events favourable to dialogue have been taking place: the institution of Koranic teachers (many of them trained in Cairo or Libya) in all schools in the country; the growth of Islamic Madrasiyya (a kind of catechetical school); the foundation of the Muslim High School; an Islamic Institute at Gambia College (to be affiliated to the University of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia). These are looked on as positive developments rather than a 'threat' because until Muslime know their own faith in semic

developed and systematic way the possibility of dialogue will remain very difficult. After the fundamental problem of attitudes, the next greatest obstacle to dialogue is ignorance of one's faith. Two of the twelve Spiritans in the Gambia have done Islamic studies in Rome.

Mauritania proclaims itself officially an Islamic republic and Mauritanians are proud of their Islamic faith. The Bishop, Mgr. de Chevigny, says: "There is no question of direct preaching of the gospel or of conversions. However, we feel that there is place for another kind of mission: that of fraternal presence, of bearing witness in action, and of prayer. By our behaviour we can preach that God is love". For the eight Spiritans, witness plays a paramount role in their apostolate. One, the only Brother in the group, works with Caritas in projects dealing with health, agriculture and the distilling of fresh water from sea water, and many Sisters are involved in medical and social work. Such forms of collaboration engender a lot of good will, but personal contacts are a greater means of dialogue. Mgr. de Chevigny says: "Over and above all, it is the entire Christian community that is missionary and gives witness."

Algeria, Mauritania's neighbour, is juridically a secular state, but Christians form a tiny minority – 80,000 in a population of 22,000,000. "Christians", says Archbishop Teissier, Coadjutor to Cardinal Duval of Algiers, "are recognized as individuals and as a group, but on condition that they do not try to proselytize and are prepared to work for the development of the country as planned by the government." Three Spiritans work in Algeria and all three have studied Arabic and done Islamic studies in Rome and in Algeria. Two of them teach in lycées to earn their living but also as a means of contact and dialogue with Muslim teachers and students. The students know them as Catholic priests. Another works full-time at a centre for the education of difficult young people, some of whom are seriously handicapped.

Still in North-West Africa, Senegal is experiencing an expansion of Islam. The flow of petrodollars is helping in the construction of mosques, and Islamic loudspeakers are blaring everywhere, stressing that islam is the religion of the majority. A branch of Islam founded in Senegal, Mourdism, has a growing influence in a nationalistic sense. While at present there is religious freedom, there is also a movement to declare Senegal an Islamic republic. Cardinal Thiandoum attended the recent Congress of Imams of

Senegal. There is an Episcopal Commission for Christian-Muslim relations (there is no Muslim on it), charged with furthering dialogue. But, as in other countries, so too in Senegal dialogue with Muslims is largely a matter of personal contact and witness The Superior of the Spiritans in Senegal has written: "Dialogue is not between two religions but between people, Muslim and Christian, and even more so African. This common humanity and common African origin, with its traditions of tolerance and discussion, should allow what may be called a dialogue of life" (Pentecôte sur le Monde, July-Oct. 1984).

In Mauritius Christians represent only a third of the population (300,000 out of 1,000,000), while Muslims are 47% and Hindus 17%. Two of the three Spiritans who are deeply involved with Non-Christians there have recently assessed their work as follows: We take one day a week for analysing and evaluating our methods of dealing with others. Once in a while, young Hindus participate in these meetings. That gives them a chance to witness to their faith while asking us to give the reasons for the faith that is in us. The groups coming to Pont-Praslin are growing larger and larger. Some come for retreats, others for more informal meetings, still others for the activities of the club. Up to now, however, it has not been possible to have a meeting between the various groups. Hindus, Muslims and Christians come, each in their turn, and for the present we can't get further than that. It is this kind of experience that makes us aware that we are tight-rope walkers with our rope stretched between the walls of prejudice."

In Pakistan Catholics number 386,000 in a population of 80,000,000 – some 0.5%. Here, as in Asia generally, the flame of the gospel is a weak glimmer. The Spiritans work with the Marwaris, who are Hindu Tribals of the lowest caste and are defenceless and often exploited. It is probable that they will soon adopt Islam or one of the other religions, probably Christianity, to help liberate them from their actual condition of oppression and poverty. But they are wary of Islam because they consider the Muslims to be their oppressors. In this overwhelmingly Islamic environment nine Spiritans bear witness to the Gospel by their continued involvement with the poor and despised, wearing the local dress and sharing their food. They are available to their people around the clock and every day. In the absence of formal structures for dialogue with Islam, they participate in the "Theology-in-Context Group', which studies the meaning of theology in Pakistan.

Conclusions

- (1) Dialogue does not have conversion as its primary aim or goal. Neither does it exclude the possibility of a change from one faith to another.
- (2) Dialogue is not aimed at undermining or destroying in any way the faith of the Non-Christian. Christ came not to abolish but to fulfil. Whatever is good and valuable in their faith should be encouraged and built upon whenever possible.
- (3) Dialogue means having contact or interaction in some form with the Non-Christian community. This means that we should no longer leave them in isolation by going along our separate parallel lines just because they are not 'convertible' in the institutional sense. The Church in recent years has tended to focus on the Animist groups for this reason thus identifying its mission with the founding of new Chris-
- tian communities only. This is a very inadequate idea of Mission, especially in the African context.
- (4) The Church is called to be the sign and instrument of unity within the human family. Our task, therefore, is to gather into one the family of mankind and not allow religion itself (or any other human differences) to become a barrier or source of division. We are called to be 'builders of bridges'. As Christians we are now painfully aware of the scandal that our divided Christian communities have caused.
- (5) Seen in this light, dialogue becomes a part of the Church's mission. It is not a preparatory stage or a kind of prelude to mission. It is an understanding of Mission that permits us to respect the duty of evangelizing and also at the same time the right to religious liberty.

I/D 40

THE GENERALATE TEAM

December 1985

Towards a Missionary Spirituality for Today

Introduction: What kind of spirituality is ours?

Spiritual life is the life in us that is animated by the Spirit of God. It is at the source of Spiritan life: what we are and what we do spring from this Spirit that dwells in us (Rom. 8:9). The offering of ourselves to the Father, our apostolate, our way of living community life, our way of interpreting the signs of the times - everything springs from the same source, which unifies and makes it all fruitful. Our spiritual life comes from "the source of love" (Ad Gentes, 2).

And yet, there are two questions that we should ask ourselves:

- 1) Is our Spiritan spirituality present in the heart of our apostolate, and creative enough to be able to respond to the needs of the world today?
 - 2) Are our apostolic activities animated by a deep

spirituality which is at the heart of our Spiritan vocation?

In fact, Spiritans are engaged in a certain number of apostolic activities in which it is difficult to find the spirit that is typically ours. And there are also many activities that fit in with our Spiritan tradition but that are not well suited to mission as understood today. In other words, the renewal of our apostolic dynamism does not always go hand in hand with our personal and community renewal. And also the renewal of methods and structures of the apostolate is not always accompanied by a conversion of heart and a renewed faith that will open us up to the world of today and involve us in new forms of mission.

The main lines of a renewed Spiritan spirituality that will promote a new apostolic dynamism are to be found, therefore, on the one hand in the sources of our Spiritan life and, on the other, in the new situations of today's mission in which we are called to bear witness to Christ.

The Sources of Spiritan Spirituality

It is from our Spiritan sources that a true Spiritan spirituality will spring. These sources are, above all, the lives and faith experiences of our Founders, which are the great parables that reveal the grace and meaning of our own vocation. In the lives of Poullart des Places and of Libermann there are a certain number of fundamental spiritual experiences that have become sources of life for the Congregation - more implicit in Poullart, more explicit in Libermann. It is these experiences that are at the origin of our Spiritan vocation, that constitute the essence of our call. Let us look at some of the more important of them.

1) The fundamental interior experience that emerges from the lives of our Founders is above all the **experience of God as the Absolute**. For both of them this was the key insight. The more they stripped themselves of everything, the more absolute God became to them.

In Poullart des Places it was a stripping off of vanity, ambition, passion for glory, worldly pomp, money, family inheritance. This awakened all the more his thirst for God and led him to a total donation of himself, to the point of a desire for martyrdom, to which he aspired with his whole sou!.

In Libermann the abnegation was still more radical: his austere education in the Jewish ghetto of Saverne, the separation from his family circle and his affective roots at the time of his conversion, his marginalization at Metz, the epilepsy that blocked his access to the priesthood, the painful night of the soul at Rennes and the departure towards the unknown, the long wait in Rome, the shipwreck of his dreams at the death of his first missionaries... ''God is all'' was indeed the keynote of his life.

Our Congregation owes a great deal to this double interior experience, which continues to be reflected in it

2) Another characteristic experience of our Founders was their faith in Providence acting through events - what would be called today an "openness to the signs of the times".

Their great apostolic options were not planned in advance - they were the fruit of their listening to the Spirit in the calls of the Church and the world of their time. Neither the Seminary of the Holy Spirit nor the Work for the Blacks was born from a premeditated plan. It was step by step, in the concrete current.

stances of their time, that God led them along his path.

One could say that the whole of Libermann's life was a continual reading of the signs of the times. Even the selection of fields of apostolate for his Congregation was made "according as Divine Providence will dispose events" (ND II, 185). His foundations were made in accordance with the urgent demands of new needs. His projects were always dependent on God's hour and God's choice.

- 3) This faith in God's presence at the heart of events expressed itself in their lives by a great docility to the Holy Spirit. To consecrate oneself to the Holy Spirit meant, for them, to dispose oneself to receive from him the inner life that makes us vibrate, as it were, on God's wavelength. Rather than a form of devotion, it is a form of inspiration. From the outset, to be a Spiritan meant to be at the disposal of the Holy Spirit, without knowing where he would lead us. To give oneself over to the Spirit is a key idea in Libermann's spirituality, and we know how he multiplied images in order to express this availability: to be like a child who expects everything from its mother, clay in the hands of the potter, a statue in the hands of its sculptor, an anvil before the blacksmith, a light feather at the whim of the wind.
- 4) The mission to the poorest was also, for our Founders, the object of an existential experience.

Poullart learnt with his poor scholars how to be poor and to live poorly. He made himself one with them, washing the dishes, running errands, taking his turn at cleaning their shoes. And, when he founded his little community, he chose as its aim not merely the upkeep and training of poor seminarians but an evangelical radicality in the service of the poor.

Libermann, for his part, had lived the full drama of the anawim. An object of humiliation and scorn, cursed by his father, without any security for the future, he was able to empathize with the Blacks of his time, and in particular the slaves and ex-slaves of Bourbon and Haiti that Le Vavasseur and Tisserant spoke of.

5) Libermann's setbacks in his first missionary foundation strengthened him in his conviction that the work of God is inseparable from the paschal mystery. Mauritius, Bourbon and Guinea were sources of great suffering for him; Guinea especially, where eight of his first ten missionaries died soon after arriving - a harrowing disaster.

This experience of the mystery of the Cross made Libermann fully aware of the ways of God: it is God who saves, it is God who builds, it is he who is the craftsman in whose hands we are but poor instruments. This realization is at the source of his calmness, his great peace, his imperturbable confidence. His spirituality springs from this abandonment into the hands of God. One must know how to wait for God's hour, to walk at his pace, to be patient: "If you knew the value of patience among the apostolic virtues, you would use all the resources of your soul to obtain it" (LS IV, 458). He is a man of peace in success as in failure. Abandonment and peace are two key elements in his spirituality.

- 6) Community life was almost an obsession with Libermann, especially in the last years of his life. Religious and community life were for him a support for apostolic life and the guarantee of its efficacy. they had to be protected, for the great distances and the dispersion that these entailed were constant threats to them. Neither in Guinea nor in Mauritius nor in Bourbon was community life free from difficulties: excessive preoccupation with the work to be done; the missionaries' spirit of independence; the Bishops' tendency to speed up apostolic activity; lack of regularity. For Libermann, infidelity to the Rule was a sort of original sin which could influence the orientation of future missionaries. For his Bishops in Africa, community life was an instrument of apostolate and its support; for Libermann it was more than that: it was the Mission's only chance, and he spent the last years of his life struggling to safeguard the community life and religious spirit of his confreres.
- 7) A final experience of Libermann's was at the source of his Instructions to Missionaries, which sum up his apostolic aims and are a sort of spiritual testament. He stresses that an apostolic project would be useless and worthless if there were not constant reference to the source that gives life: apostolic holiness. For him the missionary must be deeply rooted in Christ if his apostolic activity is to be fruitful, and he places the Spiritan's apostolic life at the heart of this "the life of love and holiness that the Son of God led on earth to save and sanctify souls, and through which he continually sacrificed himself to the glory of his Father for the salvation of the world" (ND X, 55). Libermann is convinced that the "apostolic life" contains in itself the life of Our Lord, on which our own is modelled. The Congregation is defined by it: religious life and community life are integrated in the apostolate. Its spirituality is an apostolic spirituality. This comes through quite clearly from the very first chapter of his Rule.

Spiritan Spirituality for Today

How can this current of life that flows from our origins inspire our apostolic dynamism in the new missionary situations in the Church and world of today? In other words, what are the lines of missionary spirituality that emerge both from our Spiritan sources and from the actual experience of Spiritans today?

We are, in fact, faced with many new situations which demand from us not only a change of missionary strategy but also a renewed interior attitude if we are to be able to cope with them. We do not really know yet how to come to terms with the new age of the local with the local stage. Caption of it,

and the prophets of the new age are not numerous. We are at the threshold of an era in which the issues are not yet quite clear. But certain lines are beginning to emerge, which bear on the new situations in which we find ourselves.

1. A spirituality of exodus

In the majority of our older Districts we are at a decisive juncture: the change from a missionary situation to a missionary Church. It is a time of exodus, of the piring up of cortain frames of reference and of a

sort of security to which we had become accustomed; a time that favours lighter structures that are not linked to the power and glories of the past; a time that calls for an exodus mentality and an availability of the Libermannian type. Today more than ever, our Spiritan vocation requires us to have no fixed abode, to be always on our pilgrim way. "A Congregation that is growing old is always looking for security, trying to make its tent into a house and its house into a fortress." If in the past we have been pioneers and builders, in the future we shall be called on to be pilgrims and prophets.

2. A spirituality of foundation

"Faithful to the first intuition of our Founders, we go preferably to those who 'have not yet heard the gospel message or who have scarcely heard it', and we assist at the birth and promote the growth of new Christian communities" (1985 Draft of Constitutions, 15). According to Libermann, our role is one of foundation: once a Christian community has been founded, we leave its development to others, as far as possible. It was for this reason that he insisted so strongly on the training of local clergy and leaders.

The spirituality of a founder is the spirituality of a sower: a spirituality that places its trust in grace, in the seed, in the soil, in the rain, and that leaves room for a host of unforeseen elements that may even delay the harvest. It is a spirituality that can do without immediate results, a spirituality of hope that does not need to actually see the harvest. Libermann gave to his missionaries the model of the "eminently apostolic heart of Mary". She, who was at the origin of Christ's mission and that of the Church, remained always discreetly hidden beside her Son, sharing his paschal mystery whose depths she could not fathom.

3. A spirituality of apostolic availability

"Each congregation in the Church has its own particular spirit, in accordance with its aims: the Trappists, for instance, have a spirit of penance, while the Carthusians have a spirit of prayer. We, like other missionary congregations, must have an apostolic spirit. The great means for this is to have our eyes fixed on Our Lord during his ministry, and on the apostles. These are our models" (Gloss on the Provisional Rule, p.145).

For Libermann, the Spiritan is above all an apostle, walking in the footsteps of Jesus and the Twelve; and the apostolic virtue par excellence is availability an availability which means first of all an openness to the events of the country in which he is and to the changing situations of a Church in the process of growth. It also means a reaching out to others and an acceptance of them as different, an openness to other cultures that will lead us to the ends of the earth.

"Our availability is at the same time a permanent readiness to leave the work to others, in places where we have finished our work of 'foundation' and to answer new and urgent calls which arise, whether they come from the local Church we happen to be in or from other parts of the Church universal. All his life Libermann had an ear for new needs and situations" (Spiriten Papere, no. 19, p.42)

4. A spirituality of welcome

In most of our missions the first century was the Spiritan century: that of the foundation and consolidation of the Church, in which we played a leading role. The second century will certainly be that of the local Church. Instead of 'proprietors', we have become partners.

Fr. Congar has said that the most revolutionary thesis in the ecclesiology of Vatican II was the rediscovery of the local Church: "the Church that is in Rome, in Corinth, with the characteristics of Rome and of Corinth". This does not come about all by itself. The local character of each Church has to be developed, with its liturgy, its charisms and its spirituality influenced by local conditions and culture. The word of God which becomes the seed and source of life does not remain in the hand of the sower, but takes root in the soil of the country. We have to learn the importance of places and times.

But we have been marked by a missionary training that was one of exportation rather than of welcome, and it is difficult to make this conversion unless we renew our spirituality. Our personal and community renewal, therefore, must include this conversion to the country, the culture and the treasures of the Churches that welcome us. Our prayer, our community life and our manner of living the vows should reflect this participation in the local Church. How can we imagine the Congregation in Asia without an appreciation of the values of Asian contemplation, or in Latin America without an openness to the values of Justice and Peace? "The Congregation itself receives life and vitality from these "currents of life" in the local Churches. It is moulded by the Spirit that breathes in these Churches."

A spirituality with a new stress on contemplation

All of this means a new capacity to discover God in various cultures, in history, in the signs of the times - a capacity to bring to light what is still hidden. One has to be on God's wavelength in order to see him beside us in values other than our own. Perhaps the model for tomorrow's mission will be the contemplative model of St. John rather than the strategic model of St. Matthew. St. John centres mission on the Father. As the Father sent the Son, so the Son sends the apostles to bear witness to the Father's love. Mission is considered at its source - a love that manifests itself as ministry, washing of the feet, sharing, service - rather than as a program or a strategy. The missionary must be at the service of others. Contemplation will be more and more seen as a decisive element in this kind of mission.

6. A spirituality of insecurity

In most parts of the world today, but especially in Africa and Latin America, there is a feeling of insecurity. We cannot foresee what the future will bring, and nobody can guarantee that the means that we have today will be there tomorrow. This feeling of insecurity is an essential part of the missionary vocation today, especially that of the expatriate missionary. Before sending anyone out to the missions, his superiors should ask him if he accepts insecurity as part of his vocation. If he does not, he will never succeed in adapting himself

There is also a psychological insecurity. Formerly, one went out to the missions for life. The mission Church became that of the missionary. Today we do not know for how long we will remain, for how long they will need us. And we have to let go of structures that have sheltered us in the past, structures that we may find it difficult to work outside of.

There are many questions too about our past, our image, our methods, our form of presence today, even our identity. Here too Libermann teaches us how to live for God alone, abandoning ourselves into his hands and trusting the Spirit who has called us and who guides the mission. "The uncertainty of our presence in all parts of the country is perhaps our main missionary resource; we are like the first missionaries, who never knew what the next day would bring."

7. A community spirituality

Chapter 2 of Lumen Gentium calls attention to the community aspect of our call to holiness. Our spirituality must be marked by involvement with others. It must not be an individualistic spirituality, but one of communion, sharing, complementarity. It is the Spirit who guides, and who distributes different graces and gifts to each one for the proclamation of the Kingdom. This means that we must recognize with humility and joy the elements of salvation that the Spirit has conferred on every person and on all groups of people, and that we should allow ourselves to be enriched by them and place our own gifts at their service.

Spiritan apostolic life is essentially based on community, so much so that our Founder laid down a categorical law: "All the members will live in community" (1849 Rule). His plan was for teams of missionaries, setting out from a stable community in which they lived. They could separate temporarily for tours further afield, but they would return to share what they had experienced and to live with their confreres (1840 Rule).

8. A spirituality of the universal

It has been said that we live today in a global village. We cannot live closed in on ourselves, but must be open to the universal, even in spirituality. When we look at the Spiritan scene today in all its variety of communities, experiences, commitments, charisms and gifts of the Spirit, geographical and cultural diversity, we realize how much all of this influences our spirituality. Our spirituality is not a question merely of a relationship between God and each of us; it is also a communion with all these situations and with all our confreres; its horizon is the whole of today's mission, in which the Spiritan family plays its role. We must open up a space in our prayer, in our poverty, chastity and obedience, for this fraternity and solidarity. The space of our spirituality is indeed the space of the Spirit.

A spirituality for frontier situations

We have a certain number of confreres today who live with the poor and are deeply committed with them in their struggle against oppression. Our place is certainly among the poorest, and these frontier sit-

uations play an important role in the awakening of the Congregation and its credibility. When the Church commits itself with the poor, it is renewed and gains in vitality. The increase in the number of situations of injustice in the world points out a path for us.

These situations require a type of spirituality of which we have not had much experience. There will certainly have to be elements in it that are indispensable to all spirituality: times of silence and recollection in the presence of God, of community celebrations, of adoration and the search for God for his own sake, as Christ showed us. But this meeting with the Father will be influenced by the experience of a life shared with the poor. The value of our prayer and its authenticity will be judged according to the seriousness of our commitment to the total liberation of humankind, otherwise we shall be forgetting half of the gospel.

A spirituality that grows out of situations of distress, often in the midst of situations of conflict, will of necessity be a simple spirituality, based on the daily experiences of a life of privation and hardship, in dechristianized areas, amid the struggle and improvisation that is the lot of the poor. The variety of these situations and experiences will be reflected in our prayer and our faith. It is a spirituality, therefore, that is built up along with the people, and as much among them as in one's own religious community. Whence the difficulty of finding inspiration and support for it entirely from the spirituality of the Congregation. And yet, is it not true that both the Congregation of the Holy Ghost and that of the Immaculate Heart of Mary were born from the call to frontier situations?

Conclusion: Bearing witness to our Spiritan vocation

There are other situations, e.g. situations of dialogue, which would require a new reading of our spirituality, but space does not permit us to go further.

During the first hundred years of our presence in most of the mission countries, we have been the protagonists in the Churches that we helped to build. We have substituted for the diocesan clergy, while waiting for it to come. This task has not been completely finished, but, during the second century that is beginning, what will be asked of us is that we should be more and more Spiritan: it is as Spiritans that we shall have something to say to these Churches. We must bear witness, therefore, to our own particular charism.

The witness of our religious-missionary life will become more and more important. Certain essential values of our Spiritan heritage should be more clearly seen in the Spiritan of tomorrow: the apostolic life and the holiness of the apostle - that Libermann saw as the heart of Spiritan vocation, the contemplative dimension of the apostolate, fraternal community life, the orientation of our ministry towards the service of the poor and towards frontier situations as a privileged area in which the Spiritan is called to live and bear witness to his specific vocation.

It is up to each Church and each circumscription to discern the ways that it will take, but our common denominator will be more and more our SPIRITAN IDENTITY.

I/D 41

THE GENERALATE TEAM

April 1986

A Look at the Future

"We are just a group of poor people, brought together by the will of the Master, who alone is our hope. If we had powerful means at our disposal, we would not achieve much; but, as we are nothing, have nothing and are worth nothing, we can make great plans, because our hopes are founded not on ourselves but on Him who is all-powerful" (Libermann, ND IV, 303).

Our Approach

This is the last I/D of our administration. Should we give you a report on the past six years? The Superior General will be doing this at the Chapter in July. We prefer instead to take a look ahead, remembering how often you have asked us the question: "How do you see the future?"

To be able to guess at the future means looking at the present facts, situations, developments and orientations, and prolonging them into the future. In this way a certain vision becomes possible, at least for today; tomorrow, admittedly, the course of events may not be as we foresee them.

This discernment does not remain at the level of mere analysis; it has to be interpreted in the light of faith. The Lord is present through his Spirit, and it is He who is the true shaper of Mission. To try to discover his action and his intentions in their various manifestations is a fascinating but risky task, for there is often enough light to be able to recognize his hand but also enough darkness to have to accept it in faith.

Global Vision

Let us present a summary of the main lines of our vision, which is an interpretation of our time from the point of view of religious-missionaries, though other readings are possible.

• As we look at this world to be evangelized, and the aspiration towards "a new world or-

der", we see that Mission, far from being over, is becoming more extensive and more urgent; it is called to cross over borders and become a "mission without frontiers", a somewhat different mission from that of the past.

- The renewal of the Church, begun by Vatican II, is taking place with a view to this "world to be evangelized". In the new Church being born there is promise for the future, with a new missionary drive, indeed "a new era of Mission".
- The renewal of the Congregation is to be placed in this context, with a view to Mission. Our conversions in the light of developments are an effort to reply to the needs of today's Mission. But there is a good deal more: we are also ourselves the bearers and shapers of the future. We think we can see enough of its promise to live in hope even to find our era as interesting as, if not more than, the past. It is possible to be enthusiastic about Mission.
- This point of view is based ultimately on faith and finds its light in God's word. We know from the history of the People of God and from the witnesses of the Gospel that times of trial and change are privileged moments in which the Lord works to accomplish a new project; we have only to think of the Exodus or the Exile, and still more the Cross, which was a passage to the resurrection. The more one looks at the period since Vatican II, the more one feels that the Lord is at work. What project is He working on? Various signs seem to indicate that He is renewing the Church by his Spirit, and within the Church the missionary institutes in particular, with a view to a new missionary movement. For a new world, a new mission.

Promising Signs for the Future

"Continuing Commitment to the Local Churches" (SL, 57)

In preparation for the 1986 General Chapter, we asked all circumscriptions to list in order of priority the four orientations of the 1980 Chapter, namely: 1) "a greater openness to the call of universal Mission"; 2) "a continuing commitment to our missionary involvement in the local Churches"; 3) "a deepening commitment to the poor"; 4) "a deepening commitment to the witness of our religious-missionary way of life" (SL, 56-61).

The second orientation is listed as the first priority by the majority of circumscriptions, the Districts in particular; the third and fourth are listed as second and third; while the first orientation comes in the fourth place and is mentioned as a top priority mainly by Provinces. This classification corresponds well to the situation today, and stresses the importance of our ministry in the local Churches. In many and varied ways you are contributing by your daily ministry to the coming of this "other Church" with its promise of a new missionary zeal.

A Church that is wholly Missionary

In presenting the Church as the People of God which "by its very nature is missionary" (AG, 2), the Second Vatican Council extended the missionary task of the Church to the whole Body of Christ, to all his members. You experience the importance of this "shared mission" in particular through the laity, both as a Christian and as a human community.

If the movement of this shared mission continues to develop, the Church will become a more ministerial one; it will become more mission-minded and will spread into all areas of society.

Local Churches

In order to follow more perfectly its essential vocation to be missionary, the one universal Church organizes itself and transforms itself into local Churches. Thanks in large part to the immense efforts of missionaries in the past and down to our own day, local Churches have been born and are developing in all peoples and nations, especially in the southern hemisphere. The older Churches too are evolving more in the sense of local Churches, though at a slower pace because of their traditions.

We can see great promise for the future in this aspect of the Church that is still in full evolution: responsibility for evangelization shared by each Church; engagement in local situations; Churches that grow more from below and that are enriched by a diversity of cultures.

Growth of the Churches

How can we not rejoice at seeing you share in that other promising fact that is the growth of the Churches, especially in the southern hemisphere? Africa is the most outstanding example of this. Ac-

cording to Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 1983, Africa counted 9,000,000 Christians in 1900, in 1985 the number had risen to 236,000,000, and the forecast for the year 2000 is 393,000,000, or 48% of the population of Africa and 19% of the total number of Christians in the world.

More important than the numerical growth is the progress of the local Churches, at different rates, towards self-sufficiency in personnel. Priestly and religious vocations are increasing steadily, and responsible lay community leaders are playing their part. The organization of basic Christian communities also favours the development of services and ministries and the growth of a sense of responsibility.

The coming to maturity of the local Churches means a new impetus for local evangelization and, later on, their participation in the universal Mission.

Incarnated Churches

The movement of Churches that are trying to incarnate themselves in local cultures and conditions will also influence Mission and is another sign of hope. The example of Latin America is illuminating: placing itself squarely in the context of this continent, the Church has rediscovered the Christian message as a liberating force for the poor and oppressed. The theology of the Latin American Church has influenced the Church as a whole.

One can guess all that is at stake: a new strength to the Christian message as it expresses itself in the variety of local cultures and mentalities; the preaching of salvation to people in their full human and spiritual dimensions; evangelization in depth; Churches with widely differing cultural expressions, mutually enriching each other; the development of Mission as exchange and communion.

Missionary Awakening New Provinces and Foundations

All the points already mentioned lead us to a still greater promise, namely the missionary awakening of the Churches of the southern hemisphere. The new missionary era has already begun and is taking shape. It will mean: the evangelization of the southern hemisphere by itself; the universal mission shared collegially by young and old Churches; the mission to all continents, "from everywhere to everywhere"; mission as exchange, witness, communion between Churches, renewing itself through contributions from all the Churches.

We are all playing our part in different ways in this building of the future, but it is being done in a special way in our young Provinces and Foundations of the southern hemisphere. Their growth is a good example of the missionary awakening of the Churches. They already number 133 Fathers and 12 Brothers, with 288 students in higher education in 1985 and a forecast of possibly 550 students in 1990. Most of these new Spiritans are African; the Province of Nigeria alone had 80 Fathers, 4 Brothers and 99 students doing higher studies in 1985

The young Provinces and Foundations are also playing an important role in the evolution of the Congregation as it adapts itself to the new era of Mission. We may mention some possible developments:

a) Inculturation and new expressions of the Spiritan vocation

The Congregation will be enriched by the cultures, currents and aspirations of the different continents; it will move towards greater diversity in living the Spiritan vocation; it will have to define more clearly the essential links that bind us all together.

b) The face of the Congregation is changing

Its main characteristic will be greater universality. In the distant future, with fewer vocations in the northern hemisphere, African Spiritans will be in the majority. This development will help us to open up more to universal Mission, to enter the era of mission as cooperation and communion between Churches, to be witnesses of the brotherhood of peoples. African dominance will ensure in a new way what was "the preferential option for Africa" of our origins.

c) The evolution of structures

The Districts are diminishing and, with few exceptions, are being overlaid by the growing young Provinces and Foundations. Spiritans from these have gone to countries where there were already Spiritans at work, such as Zambia and Gabon, or to break new ground such as the Nigerians are doing in Zimbabwe.

The Foundations are destined to become Provinces some day, and the East African Foundation will soon be one. The new Provinces and the Districts will coexist for a time that will be longer or shorter according to the regions. Spiritans from the different continents are called to live and work together; internationality will develop, though groups from a single Province will continue to exist. For our commitments in mission areas, the trend will certainly be towards international groups, which will replace the District structure – as in recent commitments in Pakistan, Mexico and Guinea-Bissau.

Cooperation and Solidarity

The stress we have laid on developments in the southern hemisphere does not diminish in any way the importance of the older Churches and of our Provinces in the northern hemisphere. These have a key role among the promising signs for the future, in their missionary activity today, their rich ecclesial traditions, and their support in personnel and finances. We may also note a certain renewal in our Provinces and their local Churches. The new missionary era concerns all the Churches and the whole Congregation.

Sharing, dialogue and solidarity have become more important in the past 20 years at all levels – national, regional, continental and global. New structures have been set up, such as: episcopal conferences, synods, theological symposia; organizations to promote development, Justice and Peace, Christian unity, dialogue between religions; meetings of religious and missionary institutes with each other and with the hierarchy. Within Congregations, including our own, we notice the same movement.

We believe that, with all of this, the mission of the future will be marked by a greater coresponsibility all round. Compartments and boundaries will be blurred, and there will be greater togetherness. A greater sense of universality will be seen in missionary institutes.

Renewal of Spiritan Vocation

We are ourselves deeply involved in the issues and signs for the future that have been mentioned, and it is our conviction that our Spiritan vocation is being renewed (cf. the recent I/Ds). The reports from the circumscriptions in preparation for the 1986 General Chapter bear witness to this, as can be seen from one or two examples:

"Commitment to the poor is a value of the USA West as well as a reality... We will not accept a parish if it is not among the poor. Within the last four years we have disengaged from four parishes... One of these was our most financially successful... During the same period we accepted two parishes... one among Blacks and the other among Mexican Americans... We have had community meetings where we have renewed our commitments to both Black and Hispanic minorities" (USA West).

"We have insisted especially on community witness. We have asked each community to define its project. The questions put to each community in asking them to draw up their project show which points we consider particularly important:

a) What is the mission entrusted to our community today?

b) What is the *quality of the fraternal life* that we

are living and wish to live today?

c) What are the high points of our community

ife?d) What occasions are there for taking stock peri-

odically of our community project?

e) How do the issues of *Justice and Peace* challenge our personal and community life?" (France).

In his personal study of the Draft of the Constitutions, one of our confreres picked out some keywords that keep appearing: the Holy Spirit; apostolic life according to Libermann; total donation; life in fraternal community; mission with its various aspects—the poor, Justice and Peace, dialogue, inculturation, signs of the times. In these words we can see something of our present orientation.

We could continue to evoke many signs of the renewal of our Spiritan vocation, a renewal that is taking place all the time in many forms (cf. our recent I/Ds). While attaching great importance to all the signs of promise and renewal mentioned above, we consider, with Libermann, that "holiness of life" is the most important of all. A well-known text from Libermann is often quoted among us: "The apostolic life is that life of love and holiness that the Son of God led on earth to save and sanctify souls, and by which he continually sacrificed himself to the glory of the Father for the salvation of the world" (ND, II, 290). Our meetings with you, especially our personal meetings, allow us to say: there is a deepening of spiritual and religious life in the Congregation, accompanied by community renewal; unity of life is found in the "apostolic life" according to Libermann. The whole renewal of Spiritan vocation is in view of Mission.

Why all this renewal? This world to be evangelized

As we look at all this effort at renewal in the Church throughout the world, a renewal in which the Congregation is playing its part, one may ask: "Why all this? What is at stake?" A brief glance at the world today and tomorrow will suggest the reply: it is in view of a wider, more urgent and different Mission that it is taking place. The Lord is at work through his Spirit. He is stirring up a new missionary movement in reply to the needs of today and tomorrow.

a) A wider Mission

Will evangelization keep pace with the demographic explosion? Towards the year 2000, the population of the world will be about 6,000 million. Between 1985 and 2000 it is expected that the population of Africa will pass from 520 million to 813 million (Barrett, op. cit.). Are countries and continents that were formerly Christian still to be considered so? The whole world has become a mission field. If Christians today are 32% of the world population, what of the other 68%? And can one not speak of a necessary re-evangelization for large numbers of Christians?

A new spirit of universality is growing through the renewal of the Church and of religious and missionary institutes. The 1980 Chapter oriented the Congregation in this direction: "A greater openness to the call to universal mission" (SL, 56). One sign of this, among others, is our engagement in Asia and Oceania and the option of the Indian Ocean Foundation for Asia.

b) A more urgent Mission

The demographic explosion, growing urbanization and other factors are making ever more insistent "the cry of the poor". The poor, the oppressed, the unemployed, the hungry are ever more numerous. And there is violence, war, inequality, racism, opposing blocs, totalitarian regimes etc.

"I have seen, I have seen the misery of my people" (Exodus 3:7). The Church and religious and missionary institutes are called to become more fully involved in the struggles and aspirations of human-kind, to renew their sense of mission to the poor, to intensify their efforts for Justice and Peace, integral development, brotherhood and solidarity. We must renew the ideal of our apostolic life by "a deepening commitment to the poor" (SL, 59).

c) A different Mission Different Approaches

Mission-as-conversion has failed with the great religions, which form a large part of humankind. Sev-

enteen percent of the world population are Muslims, 13% Hindus, 6% Buddhists. By the year 2000 Asia will account for 65% of the world's population, and will have the smallest proportion of Christians (only 3%). And yet Christ's command remains: "Preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15).

Vatican II took a different look from that of the past at religions, cultures and other human realities, inviting us to a different approach to evangelization. The Council recognized that "all people of good will, in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way," can be associated with the paschal mystery: "We ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to everyone the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery" (Gaudium et Spes, 22). It spoke of the Holy Spirit, who "visibly anticipated the apostles' action" (Ad Gentes, 4), It invited us to discover "the seeds of the Word" contained in "national and religious traditions" (AG, 11). As for the great religions, the Council recognized their religious and salvific values and exhorted Catholics prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, to acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these people, as well as the values in their society and culture" (Nostra Aetate, 2).

From this we can see something of the Mission that will certainly develop in the future and will concern the greater part of humanity, namely: the discovery of God's presence and action in human persons and realities before the preaching of the gospel; dialogue and cooperation with all those of good will and with the great religions, which are trying like ourselves to meet the challenges of the world. Our confreres in Mauritania, whom we have visited this year and who have found ways of dialogue with Islam, all say that they are beginning to see the fruits of their presence there. It is not rash to think that dialogue and cooperation are a possible and providential stage, while waiting for "God's hour" (Cardinal Duval).

Bearers of the Promise

You are members of Christ's Body, and, together with the Church and the Congregation as a whole, you all share in these promising signs for the future and contribute to them. Each one's personal share may not seem to amount to much; often it is hard to make it out at all, and one may sometimes question the utility of part of one's work. Let us remember the words of Mother Teresa about her work for the poor: "It is only a drop in the ocean, but something would be missing if it weren't there." With Libermann, let us put our hope in the Lord, "whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine" (Eph. 3:20).

"All works undertaken and carried out in the Church have met these same difficulties, and often even greater ones, and yet these difficulties did not dismay the apostolic people who undertook them, and did not prevent them from carrying them out with as much steadfastness as success. It has always been the order of providence to manifest its maternal care in the midst of obstacles, and the best results have normally been produced after the greatest difficulties. So it would be wanting to deviate from the ordinary ways of providence, it would be wanting to perform a human work, to want to undertake nothing except with an absolute guarantee of success, and the assurance that all difficulties will be smoothed out." (Libermann ND VIII, 92).

I/D 42

THE GENERALATE TEAM

January 1987

United in the service of the Kingdom

Introduction

The 1986 General Chapter had three objectives: to finalize the Spiritan Rule of Life, elect a Superior General and Council, and evolve guidelines for the next six years. Capitulants brought great application to these tasks, but found that they could not complete work on the guidelines within the time available. For the guidelines the Chapter divided itself into nine 'regions', of which the outgoing General Council was one.

A commission collated all the reports; there emerged five common concerns with different emphasis in different regions. These, however, could not be issued as guidelines or published as such because the Chapter could not round off its work on them. The five common concerns were:

- i. Foundations and new provinces
- ii. New forms of mission

- iii. Community renewal
- v. Solidarity
- v. Justice and Peace.

On the morning of 1st August, after a debate in the General Assembly, the Chapter voted to hand over to the Superior General and Council the regional reports, the collation in five common concerns and the minutes of the debates in the General Assembly as a basis for evolving Guidelines for animation during the next six years. This mandate of the Chapter we are now carrying out. We have in numerous discernment sessions reflected on our Chapter experience and studied all the reports. In what follows, the five common concerns are subsumed under wider themes evoked by the Chapter, and certain recurrent themes of the Chapter have been recovered. We are confident that we have seized the spirit of the Chapter and therefore offer what follows as the guidelines of our animation.

1. Mission geared towards the Kingdom for the 'poor'

The evangelization of the 'poor' is our purpose (cf. Luke 4: 18) — Rule 4.

a) The poor yearn for God's Reign

We can relate the above quotation to a dictum of Libermann cited in the Rule: they shall be the advocates, supporters and defenders of the weak and the little against those who oppress them (N.D. X, 517; Rule 14). Who are the poor and what is our commitment to them? The Chapter gave a clear answer by referring us to the biblical image of the poor and their expectation of God's reign — our commitment to the poor is one with our commitment to the coming Kingdom of God. But how is the coming of this Kingdom good news to the poor?

The biblical poor were poor, not just in an economic sense, but in the sense of definite oppressed groupings — they were the class without defence in a godless society, liable to be disinherited, at the mercy of the violent and the mighty. The biblical types of the poor were orphans, widows and strangers; and later with the growth of urbanization, beggars (cf. Lazarus, Luke 16). In society as it then was, there was no one to give them redress. Increasingly the poor looked forward to the coming of God's reign and the universal justice which would flow from it (Psalms 72: 1-4; 146: 6-8)¹. Often (cf. Isaiah 2: 1-4) the Kingdom of God was represented as a city. Mount

Zion, towards which all the nations go on pilgrimage. There God is King, destroying all violence and oppression and establishing the cause of the poor. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, there will be no more training for war. Beasts of prey will eat grass: "they do no hurt nor harm on all my holy mountain" (Isaiah 11: 6-9).

b) Justice for the poor in God's Kingdom

This kingdom is therefore characterized as a kingdom of peace and justice. 'Justice' in this connection does not refer to an act, but to a situation — that situation of perfect fulfilment of God's covenant in which as a result there is protection for the weak and triumph for the cause of the oppressed and powerless. Such a situation was not merely material or political; it was seen as flowing from the triumph of God's covenant. Israel herself, in her later history oppressed by the nations because of the covenant, saw herself as the poor on whose behalf God would act.

When, therefore, Jesus announced: the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is close at hand (Mark 1:15), he was evoking a theme in the people's expectation. He called on them to turn to God and their neighbour in reconciliation and justice

c) Good News for the poor - our aim

The Church works in the world for the realization of the Kingdom. Within the Church, we Spiritans have committed ourselves to realizing one aspect of the Kingdom — as good news for the poor. We bear a particular concern for those who are disadvantaged materially or spiritually. We work to establish a kingdom of justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). This has a wider context than the internal concerns of the Church.

For us, therefore, mission is everywhere, and it would be quite wrong to suggest that Christianity is more or less ill at ease (that is, still poorly inculturated) in the Third World countries, but is, on the other hand well integrated in Europe². The poor are everywhere with us. For us they are:

 those who have not yet heard the gospel message or have scarcely heard it; the oppressed and disadvantaged, individually and collectively; groups, including Churches, whose needs are greatest, or for whom it is difficult to find workers (Rules 4 and 12). Today's changing world and Church reveal to us new faces of the poor and challenge us to respond in a creative manner. These challenges we have outlined in the section on renewal in apostolic life (4b). With these in mind, each circumscription will carry out a discernment to evaluate its mission, always in dialogue with the General Council and along the general lines decided by the Chapter. One final point: since our mission is directed to that 'civilization of love' which is God's intention for human society, it follows that justice and peace is one of the vital dimensions of our Spiritan life, a criterion for our choice of engagements. We shall later respond in greater detail to the desire expressed during the Chapter that we clarify 'justice and peace'.

Reflection

- How does your community understand mission and what options are open to you?
- What are Spiritans doing about justice and peace in your area?

2. Mission as Communion

"The local Church is not a Church if it is not Catholic, neither is there a Church Catholic except in the local Churches".

a) The local Church is a communion

The local Church is above all a communion of those united in the confession of the one Lord, Jesus Christ, a communion which expresses itself in the common sharing at the eucharist. Often the local Church gathers within itself peoples of diverse tongues and ways of life, thus already foreshadowing the universal reconciliation brought by Christ. The local Church is called to mission, to attend to the needs of all, both within and without itself.

b) The communion of local Churches

Each local Church, with its presbyterium around its bishop, is both particular and universal, and all are united with one another and with Peter in a bond of faith and love. All share in the task of proclaiming the gospel everywhere, and are obliged to enter into a community of effort for this (LG, 23). Fidei Donum priests and other groups have in recent times originated from this combined effort.

Each individual part of the Church contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church (LG, 13). The diverse riches of the Churches are therefore to be fostered; they manifest the catholicity of the Church (AG, 6).

c) The Congregation is a communion

The Congregation is also a communion. Coming from different cultures, continents and ways of life, we have been gathered together by the Spirit of Pentecost (Rule 35). As the General wrote in his Christmas Message: "Our differences are not obstacles to

unity, but can on the contrary become a way to achieving a unity that is living and dynamic, if they allow us to challenge each other and lead to conversion and a deepening of our life and activity".

In a communion of ideas, we are willing to listen to and accept the different perspectives on mission and life of confreres who live in situations different from our own. This is not easy and will always demand an effort on the part of all.

d) The Congregation in communion with local Churches

The Spiritan community lives and works in close communion with the local Churches (Rule 30). To them we bring the testimony of our religious apostolic life in community. We inspire them to look beyond the needs of their own sacramental life and to respond to the needs of the wider Church and of the world. We participate in the elaboration of goals, offering ourselves for those tasks which conform to our particular vocation. "Be yourselves, but always in relation to others", said an African bishop to one of our district chapters.

From the local Churches we receive the riches of their proper manner of experiencing and confessing Christ. They sometimes reveal to us new ways of living our apostolic life, new tasks and new possibilities, which after due discernment are taken up into our patrimony.

Reflection

- Examine critically your relationships with the local Church and your engagement in it.
- Have you any proposals about unity and diversity in the Congregation?

3. Mission as Dialogue

a) Dialogue permeates our apostolic life

The Spiritan Rule of Life presents dialogue as one of the essential dimensions of our apostolic life. It is mentioned apropos of community living. It should mark our relationships with local Churches. It is prescribed in our meeting with cultures, the world religions and other Christian bodies. There are even situations where confreres live mission only as dialogue (Pakistan, Ethiopia, Algeria). A recent example of dialogue in act was the World Day of Prayer for Peace by all religions at Assisi, 27th October 1986.

True dialogue is difficult, a goal to be worked at, not a given fact. Sometimes we ourselves or our partners in dialogue are not sincere enough or open enough. Nor does dialogue prohibit or inhibit clear conviction and commitment on the one hand, or formal presentation and evangelization on the other, when this is possible.

b) At the heart of dialogue

An authentic life based on the gospel must for us be at the basis of every dialogue. Such a life is in itself invitation and proposition in terms of deep and lived human values. Dialogue presupposes respect for the dignity of every person, constant effort to detach ourselves from our own culture as a norm in order to enter into the depths of another's experience and aspirations. It implies self-criticism and the ability to let oneself be challenged by the lived experience of another. It is depth speaking to depth in a mutually fruitful exchange.

"Dialogue is thus the norm and necessary manner of every form of Christian mission, as well as of every aspect of it, whether one speaks of simple presence and witness, service or direct proclamation (cf. CIC, 787, 1). Any sense of mission not permeated by such a dialogal spirit would go against the demands of true humanity and against the teachings of the Gospel" 4.

c) Dialogue and culture

The Spiritan Rule of Life underlines this. It prescribes that we learn the language of our hosts and seek to understand their customs and usages; that we accept with respect the depths of their human and religious experience and seek a fruitful encounter between the Gospel and their tradition of life (Rule 16. 1, 2).

Since no one possesses the truth in a perfect and total way, "mutual affirmation, reciprocal correction and fraternal exchange lead partners in dialogue to an ever greater maturity which in turn generates interpersonal communion. Religious experiences and outlooks can themselves be purified and enriched in this process of encounter"5.

Reflection

- Examine dialogue within your community.
- What is happening in your community about inculturation and acculturation?

4. The Spiritan community in mission

a) Dynamic fidelity to the founders

"That is why loyal recognition should be accorded to the spirit of the founders, as also to all the particular goals and wholesome traditions which constitute the heritage of each community" (PC, 2).

Poullart des Places and Libermann, each in his own way, announced good news to the poor. Each was marked by apostolic zeal, utter gift of self, pliability in the hands of the Holy Spirit, deep interior life and a great sensitivity to the needs of the time. Multitudes of Spiritans in many lands and epochs have built on this patrimony. Fidelity to our founders invites us in our turn to respond in a creative manner to the needs of our time (Rule 2).

b) A renewed apostolic life

We are not 'service stations', but the 'cutting edge' of the Church. Everywhere new needs make fresh calls on us in the places where we work: the overcrowded and uprooted people in the great cities, the problems of youth especially in the towns, refugees, immigrants, exploitation of rural populations, racial discrimination, injustice and war, oppression of the Third World, lack of dialogue between the great religions . . . We need a change in our vision of the Church and world, a change of methods (anthropology, social analysis . . .) We must try to respond

creatively to these new situations, even with the shortage of personnel in some places.

The laity have been called 'the sleeping giant'. In view of the proposed Synod on the Mission of the Laity, it is providential that our Rule should so emphasize our work in the formation of, and collaboration with, the laity. Circumscriptions disengaging from traditional parishes in developed local Churches should consider this apostolate a priority. Please send us reports about programs and experiments in this area.

c) Renewal in religious life

The world is experiencing a spiritual hunger. Many are searching for ways of prayer and the interior life. To them we should bring a heart each day renewed in Christ (Rule 50) and our particular tradition of 'practical union', always bearing in mind that true evangelizing zeal does not spring from impulsiveness of character but from union with the Lord. Our very religious life in community is itself a means of evangelization, an invitation.

d) Community renewal

A great yearning for community is one of the marks of our times. Many new communities are

springing up in the Church. The Church, especially in her eucharistic community, is the sign and instrument of the community of all humankind (cf. LG, 1). Our religious community within the Church is an intensification of this unity and reconciliation. Nevertheless, true community is always a goal for which we strive. It demands a common vision, common goals, self-denial in the service of others and adequate structures for sharing and support.

That is why the Rule prescribes the vision statement (projet communautaire, Rule 41.3) elaborated by the community at every level. It specifies the aims and services of the community, its apostolate and methods, also the material means (including the rhythm of prayer, the style and quality of common living . . .) to achieve its goals. These are regularly evaluated by the community.

Local communities are to be promoted and strengthened wherever possible. Regional communities, where they have proved useful, are equally to be given better structures according to Rule 30.4. We propose, for the use of all, the document *Experiencing Community*, presented (in French) at the Chapter. (The English translation will be sent out later.)

Reflection

- Give two or three urgent needs of renewal in your area.
- What is needed to create true community in your area?

5. Solidarity

a) Solidarity in mission

All that has been said concerning mission as dialogue, mission as communion, true community life, find expression in a reality to which the Chapter attached great importance: solidarity. It is a 'spirit' to be developed; the future of the Congregation may depend on it. We are all conscious of sharing in the one mission, each member taking charge of a different aspect of it. To say that there is solidarity between the circumscriptions is to say that the older provinces feel responsible for the future of the foundations and young provinces, but also that the foundations and young provinces are concerned about the future of the older provinces: at the level of sharing and exchange we are all equal. We are all concerned that some old provinces are in danger of phasing out. The future will probably see an increase in exchanges and in internationality within the Congregation. Modifications may be called for in our present organization. Already regional cooperation is a fact in some areas, and there are suggestions about formal region-Solidarity in formation and in the other forms of animation within the Congregation may demand concerted planning and exchange of qualified personnel.

b) The Foundations and young Provinces

Having stressed that solidarity is incumbent on all and extends to all, we would want to draw attention to the great need of the foundations and young provinces. We must, however, first thank all the circumscriptions for the very generous donations to Cor Unum in recent years. We encourage you to give even more. We are having to set up formation structures in many foundations because of the abundant vocations. Buildings are in progress in the Spiritan International School of Theology, Enugu, and work will soon begin on extensions in Brazzaville for a theologicum to be fully independent by 1988. A philosophicum is underway in Arusha, and construction will start in 1987 on a novitiate and philosophicum in Kumasi. Foyers for candidates are foreseen in the Indian Ocean, Puerto Rico and Spain.

For some time in the future these foundations will depend on your solidarity for formation and animation personnel.

c) Solidarity with the General Council

May we add that, with the present style of government in the Congregation, the Superior General and Council cannot fulfil their role of coordination and animation unless the Congregation lives at all levels this spirit of solidarity. Each circumscription should, for example, feel itself jointly responsible for projects of the Congregation decided by the General Chapter.

Reflection

- How do you see regionalization?
- How can we promote solidarity within the Congregation?

Conclusion

The General Council considers it important for its style of animation to be in constant touch with life at the grassroots. It is important that we work together to give concrete expression to these guidelines in the different aspects of our mission. By exchanging our experiences and evaluating them together, we enrich one another with what the Spirit does in us within the different cultures and local Churches.

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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- 5 Ibid., no. 21.
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I/D 43

THE GENERALATE TEAM

November 1988

Committed to the Poor: Action for Justice and Peace

"We count the following as constitutive parts of our mission of evangelization: the 'integral liberation' of people, action for justice and peace and participation in development. It follows that we must make ourselves 'the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them" (Spiritan Rule of Life, 14; Rule of 1849).

1. Justice and Peace: Already in Our Midst

- A Spiritan parish in Sierra Leone formed an Ecumenical Action for Justice Group. With some support from local civil authorities, the group meets weekly to determine appropriate responses to local incidents of injustice. Reports of excessive charges by a doctor and bribes by a border guard were recently acted upon.
- Spiritans in Amsterdam assist African students and itinerant foreign workers living in Holland. In addition to providing spiritual and material support, Spiritans work with these groups to assure their humane treatment under Dutch law.
- The culture and lands of indigenous Indian peoples are critically endangered in parts of Brazil. Through their village groups, Indians make their personal responses to these concerns. Aided by Spiritans who work with them, the Indians also call upon the local Church to assist.
- Sudan's severe development needs are tragically complicated by a large influx of refugees. The Spiritan presence there labours administratively on behalf of the local Church, assuring that relief and development funds are acquired and carefully distributed.

Many examples of Justice and Peace can be found among Spiritans. Some few are offered as illustrations. These suggest that as people of the Mission, Spiritans are not just now hearing that the Gospel is a force for liberation. When we took on Christ's mission within the Spiritan tradition, we entered the work to reform whatever oppresses people.

In ministries such as first evangelization, basic Christian communities, education, pastoral service and formation, we have been helping to free people from and its consequences. To the extent that

we have been true to this mission, we have, often quietly and unobtrusively, gone about these toilsome and often thankless tasks. Yet, we constantly seek guidance and courage to express more fully this Gospel imperative towards liberation. Some confreres are showing us the way.

In developing countries: We know only too well the extreme oppression and pain of some peoples and nations among whom Spiritans labour. In such countries the Church herself is often the only pillar standing for justice. Spiritan missionaries serving in these settings are at times the only effective voices of the people; their mere presence can deter oppression.

Policies which impoverish nations are a scandal of our times. Some confreres work in the developing world, trying to effect a change in these policies. Many of us ministering in these countries do what we can in local settings, helping to diversify one-crop economies, teaching self-help skills, effecting a transfer of appropriate technology, etc. It is a credit to our missionaries that some basic cash and food crops have been introduced, effectively reducing dependency.

In developed countries, many Spiritans labour in direct service to the poor. Others turn the minds and hearts of their people to injustices at every level of society through preaching, teaching and quiet personal example. A great deal has been achieved through membership in human rights associations, national and international. Spiritan provincials of the European Spiritan Provinces, for example, are considering participation in the Africa Faith and Justice Network/Europe. This joint effort of missionary institutes, already being carried out in North America, will promote more just and equitable relationships between the peoples of Africa (a. Europe).

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2. A Difficult Step

Still, the truth is that this call for Spiritans to serve justice is troubling to many of us. Feelings of discomfort, unfamiliarity and disinterest sometimes arise when we are asked to promote justice in concrete ways. The reasons for these feelings are numerous.

For many, our initial formation did not prepare us to make action for justice integral to ministry. Thus, the complexity of society's structures leaves us unsure where to begin. We can be both intimidated and blinded by the policies of governments. The seeming excesses of some justice activists are often seen as hurting rather than helping the poor. Even the special 'justice jargon' makes understanding and action difficult. These and other factors conspire to distance many of us from action for justice.

As proclaimers of the Gospel, we confidently teach prayer life or love of neighbour. It is far more difficult to discuss action to change unjust structures in our society. Formators at every level in the Congregation speak regularly about relationship with God and neighbour. They are often far more uneasy in discussing our responsibility as Spiritans in situations of injustice. Bursars are ever searching for the "economic" saving; it is much more difficult for them to examine the justice implications of investments. Much has been written on our Founders as guides in our personal relationship with God. Have we searched these Spiritan Sources thoroughly for what they might have to say about the root causes of the hardships in the lives of the poor?

3. A Most Urgent Call

Francis Libermann's urging that his followers become advocates of the weak against oppression has been echoed with increased intensity in recent years. This echo comes to us from the life situations in which we work. It resounds also within the Congregation as a whole.

The Rule of Life referred to Justice and Peace as "constitutive" of our Spiritan mission (SRL 14). In calling us to this effort, the Rule voiced in a personal way the post-Council Synod: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the

world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation' (Justice in the World, 6). When the 1986 Chapter delegates identified guidelines for the present Generalate Team, Justice and Peace emerged as one major concern. As early as the 1980 General Chapter, the Spiritan Life (SL) document called for the integration of Justice and Peace into every major area of Spiritan life.

4. A New Dimension

Spiritans have always felt a special call to help impoverished or oppressed peoples. What special insight into the gospel message does the new stress on Justice and Peace give us?

Essentially, it is the "discovery" that poverty among other things is a "structural problem". Poverty in today's world cannot be explained simply by a people's misfortune, lack of knowledge, lack of initiative or access to development. It is also the result of political and economic decisions of governments and institutions of all forms. The "discovery" is that today's poverty is not accidental. It is woven into the fabric of society and is often the result of particular policies and systems. This happens despite the good intentions and unawareness of those who administer the structures. In this context, poverty becomes a political problem, a question of injustice and a matter of changing structures.

A great debt is owed to those Spiritans whose compassion for the poor is a powerful witness to us all. This effort to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and forgive the sinner is an essential step in the service to the poor. Today, the Congregation asks still more: that we "promote justice in the social, economic, political and religious lives of our people" (SRL 30.1). This demands that we work alongside people to improve their circumstances in the world... and to change unjust structures which victimize them.

Thus, action for justice demands, at once, a new courage and a profound sense of communion with the

poor. This courage calls us to examine more deeply, from a Christian perspective, the structures that surround and often victimize the poor. The discovery of "structural sin" and its remedies requires an analysis which reaches the roots of social problems, raises our consciousness and leads to courageous action. We offer a few illustrations:

- Illiteracy has been found to be the basic cause of oppression in some countries. In these places, adult literacy programmes are major tools for transformation.
- Migrants, refugees and racial minorities are often subjected to unjust discrimination. In some areas, the discrimination is along religious lines.
- A whole population may be in danger of extinction because of a loss of identity; in the case of the Maasai, for example, this is because of a culture clash, the restriction of grazing rights, and land alienation.

Analysis of social situations involves a special kind of action: one taken in communion with the poor. This implies an ever deepening awareness that they themselves have wisdom and ability to work at their own structural problems. As the sensitivity to this strength of the poor grows, our service changes from one of labouring for them to a partnership with them. Giving expression to this change of attitude, a Spiritan recently commented, "Are we worthy enough to work with the poor?"

5. Our Faith Response

"This is what Yahweh asks of you, only this: that you act justly, that you love tenderly, that you walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

As a religious missionary community pledged by our Rule of Life to service of the poor, against whom much of the world's injustices are committed, we are called upon to be just and to act justly.

This divine imperative has, however, a broader faith context. It is but one of the demands made by the Lord. Three such demands are suggested by the Micah text cited above. Taken together these aspects of life – walking humbly with God, loving tenderly and acting justly – provide a basis for an integrated spirituality (Dorr, pp. 8-18).

5.1 Religious Conversion: "Walk Humbly with Your God"

Micah's demand that we "walk humbly with our God" can be taken to refer to our personal relationship with God. This relationship preserves both our uniqueness and acknowledges that each of us has a part in the Creator's loving plan for salvation. Human freedom and God's reign are delicately balanced in this relationship.

The Spirit who works in us lives in the world, making it holy. From the midst of this world, the Spirit calls us to a religious conversion, to an ever deeper relationship with God. We are constantly reformed by the events of daily life in the world.

5.2 Moral Conversion: "Love Tenderly"

Spiritans are meant to be people for others. The "others" are family, relatives, friends and acquaintances. The "others" are those with whom we have been drawn by the Spirit to live out our Spiritan calling in community. It is, most particularly for Spiritans, the "others" of our apostolic commitments (SRL 12).

The divine command to "love tenderly" draws attention to this second area of an integral Christian spirituality, i.e. interpersonal relationships. Stress in moral conversion is placed on deepening the quality of our person-to-person relationships. It compels us to develop an ever stronger interest in the personal lives of the people we serve, their traditions and their need for continual growth. This is the solidarity asked of Spiritans.

Moral conversion goads us to acknowledge that Spiritan communities need the mutual support of their members. Thus, living together in community calls us to a mutual "forbearance, pardoning and sharing" (SRL 24). This conversion has, too, its expressions of attentiveness toward our families, relatives and those personally close to us. A spirituality-for-others lived out each day ever "more tenderly" in the human cycles of pain and joy virtually consume the missionary.

5.3 Political Conversion: "Act Justly"

The final element of this integrated spirituality is to "act justly". It is a political conversion in the sense that it calls us to a genuine care about public life. Here, the person of faith moves beyond personal relationship with God and face-to-face relationships with people. The believer acknowledges in political conversion that the same Spirit who inspires these relationships intends that we work to build societies that are just.

To "act justly" in this context moves us beyond commutative justice with its special attention to personal forms of honesty. It calls us to a fuller understanding of how a society and all its benefits are organized or structured. "In order to contribute effectively to promoting justice, we make every effort to analyse situations, to lay bare the relationship of individual cases to structural causes" (SRL 14.1).

Understanding and analysis are important beginnings to action for justice. Such action reaches a fulness when we seek in concrete ways the promotion of justice and peace in the social, economic, political and religious life of people.

This political conversion is the newest of these three demands for conversion to enter explicitly into the consciousness of the Church. While expressions, timing and the appropriateness of actions for justice can be argued, there seems to be little doubt that the promotion of liberation from oppression and transformation of the world is "a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel" (Justice in the World, 15). This has special relevance for Spiritans, on whom the oppressed and those whose needs are the greatest have a special claim.

5.4 An Integrated Faith Response

As believers, each of us has formed a sense of the God who lives among us. This sense of the Holy, our spirituality, is shaped by who we are, where we have come from and what we have experienced. Spirituality is that part of us that images God and the work of the Spirit in our lives. It is from this imaging that we articulate for ourselves and, as Spiritan missionaries, for others our experience of God. In its deepest sense, this is our faith, a faith that is at once very personal and shared with others.

An authentic call to conversion – whether it be religious, moral or political – is a challenge to the personal spirituality of each Spiritan. As a result of our own histories, we often find ourselves concentrating almost exclusively on one or another aspect of spirituality.

"Many 'good' people wake up to a deep sense of God's providence and this leads them to a prayerful and enthusiastic spirituality; but they may remain quite insensitive in their human relations and may lack all sense of the 'political' dimensions of the Christian faith. Other people build their spirituality around openness to others; but they may be lacking in depth

because they give little time to prayer and reflection; and they may imagine that the world can be changed without major structural changes in society. Finally, there are some deeply committed Christians who are so intent on changing the social, economic and political order that they sacrifice their own peace of spirit and their human relationships in a frenzy of quasipolitical activity" (Dorr, p. 18).

Spiritan spirituality does not serve us well, if it overemphasizes one or another form of conversion. Rather, it must call us to the fulness of conversion: "religious", "moral" and "political". It serves neither the Christian faith nor the Spiritan vocation to neglect any aspect of the conversion demanded of us today by the Spirit. Together, we must strive for an integrated spirituality.

6. Orientations for Animation in Justice and Peace

It is in this faith context that we have asked ourselves, "What animation for Justice and Peace among Spiritans is needed today?" In response, we have chosen three major orientations: action, formation and structures for justice.

Practical actions for justice asked by our Rule and the world of today are responsibilities shared by the individual Spiritan, local circumscriptions and the Generalate Team. Always, this action must be informed and motivated by faith.

Thus, the demand made upon us is not only to act justly but to be just. We must form ourselves as a just Community. This formation of an authentic Spiritan is too vital a task to be reserved solely to those living through initial formation (SRL 102). It is the life-

time task of continual deepening of our apostolic life (SRL 100).

To accomplish these vital tasks, we must use the human and material resources at our disposal. New structures will be required, which are adequate for the work and in keeping with Spiritan simplicity.

In summary, we want:

- to act for justice, making it an integral part of Spiritan apostolic life;
- to assure the formation of Spiritans as just and peace-filled persons;
- to develop appropriate community structures which enable action and formation for justice.

7. Some Questions

We have offered here our thoughts on action for justice in Spiritan life. Now, we invite you to join us and to help deepen this reflection:

- We have written about the good which we have seen Spiritans doing in the cause of Justice and Peace. How are you and fellow Spiritans able to express Justice and Peace in your lives and ministries?
- The difficulties in implementing action for Justice and Peace have been discussed honestly. So, too, was the sense of urgency found in the Spiritan Rule of Life and our life situations that we make Justice and Peace integral to our lives. Has this sense of urgency touched you and your Spiritan Community? If you are having difficulty with the integration

of this dimension of our apostolate, can you discuss this openly with fellow Spiritans?

- We presented an approach to spirituality which includes action for Justice. How does your personal and community experience with justice influence your faith and spirituality?
- What have we not said about Justice and Peace in our lives together that needs to be added?

Please, take these reflections and questions to your people and fellow Spiritans. Talk to us in visitations and various meetings about your experiences. Let us know if there is something more that the Generalate Team can do to respond to the Spiritan challenge of making ourselves the "advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak".

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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I/D 44

THE GENERALATE TEAM

April 1989

Spiritan Formation Today

This document on initial Formation is the fruit of joint research and dialogue, undertaken to try to deepen our understanding of this essential aspect of our work of animation.

The General Council asked the two Councillors concerned with Formation to prepare it, and discussed the general lines it should take. The first draft was then sent out to a dozen formators, who were asked for their comments and suggestions.

The Council hopes that numerous reactions to it from all parts of the Congregation will help to give greater precision, in subsequent documents, to the "dynamism and unity" of Spiritan formation (cf. SRL 106).

I. They will begin their mission in the year 2000

a) In a little over ten years we shall be in the third millennium. The young men entering our formation programs at present will be then beginning their ministry. What is the Spiritan religious and missionary ideal that they are preparing themselves to live at that time with us?

From what we can gather from the formators' projects and the students' aspirations, and in the light of our Rule of Life, we can already say this much:

In the year 2000, the Spiritan will continue to commit his life to sharing the sufferings and the hopes of the poor. He will have learnt to be particularly close to the abandoned persons and groups that our world is producing in increasing numbers: immigrants and refugees, the young, the casualties of urbanization... those who have not yet heard, or have hardly heard, or who no longer hear, the Good News. He will work with them and will be able to analyse the moral and social causes of their suffering. He will have been trained in educational techniques, in the social sciences, in defending the integrity of Creation. He will commit himself, with courage and discernment, to changing unjust structures.

What are the frontiers that he will have to cross? They will no longer be merely geographical frontiers. In multiracial, pluralist societies the Spiritan will know how to defuse racial tensions caused in part by fear. He will have become accustomed to risking himself in dialogue and ecumenism which, in order to be credible, will require ever greater competence, ability to listen humbly to the other side, and a firm faith.

He will have assumed and relativized his own culture, and will have acquired the ability to enter sympathetically into that of others. A disciple of the "fraternity" of the Kngdom, he will be everywhere a builder of community. He will realize that the task of evangelization cannot neglect a good knowledge of the laws of group dynamics. He will be less inclined to live on

his own, knowing how to build both regional and local communities, and maintaining close contact with his confreres. He will be a happy person, having learnt to discern the signs of the future Kingdom in the world of today.

This global image of the Spiritan is inscribed in our Rule of Life. Students, formators, missionaries in the field are at one in pursuing an ideal in which they recognize themselves. There remains the task of putting into effect the "creative fidelity" that our Rule speaks of. This is a challenge for us as persons, for our missionary commitments, and for our religious and community activity. It is a challenge too for our programs and methods of formation. The time has come to draw the conclusions from the choices that we have made together. Fortunately, though much remains to be done, there are many signs of the dynamism of our formation.

b) Formation communities being built up

The image of the ideal Spiritan that has just been evoked is actually being built up in various formation communities throughout the world: their very diversity is a sign of their adaptability and vitality. Spiritans have a reputation as builders. This is no doubt a proof of realism: can a community live without a place to live in? With young men knocking at our door, houses of formation have grown up in the southern hemisphere and even in the north. But what is being built is not merely material.

In the **older provinces**, regional cooperation is increasing: international novitiates, supervised overseas training programs, a joint month of preparation for the "final consecration to the apostolate" are the fruit of this cooperation. There is an increasing willingness to work together, across frontiers. The same dynamism is found in experiments with intercongregational and inter-confessional formation.

The main problems faced by these provinces is that of vocations. Why does the West, formerly so rich in missionary vocations, find itself with so few nowadays? Is it because of the weight of the past, in which colonization and missionary endeavour are now seen as having been too closely linked? And yet, in the older Christian countries, "new communities", many with a missionary orientation, are embarking on new paths, stirring up interest among young people and speaking to them. There are, at present, 166 young men in Europe and North America preparing to follow a Spiritan vocation with us. They encourage us to trust in the future. With the boldness and solidarity of the poor, the older provinces must show imagination. With a duty to utter a call to the young, should we not show ourselves as clever as those who "belong to this world"?

In the young provinces and foundations, the numbers continue to increase: students from the south now account for three-quarters of the newly professed in the Congregation. Many of them live in an intercultural setting from the time they join us. Research is continuing on how to improve the inculturation of our religious life, and on how to renew the vocation of the Spiritan Brother.

The first Spiritan university centre in Africa, the Spiritan International School of Theology (SIST), was officially inaugurated on 10 December last, while the

new Province of East Africa collaborates in an intercongregational consortium in Nairobi. The first missionaries from the foundations are already at work in the field, and their pioneering experience can serve as a pattern for those who will follow them. Taking their place in the overall Mission, they will find their own way of preaching the good news and of showing solidarity with the poor.

c) Is intercultural formation possible?

In welcoming all these young men who ask to join us, the Congregation is becoming increasingly multi-Should we not enrich ourselves still more from our diversity, by multiplying, at certain moments of formation, houses that bring together formators and students from different cultures? At present our formation structures are so diverse that the practice of internationality is still difficult. This springs not only from cultural diversity but also from different "philosophies" of formation, some being more directive from above, others associating the students more closely with the elaboration of the training process, some being more deductive, others more inductive, with more stress on practical experience in the field etc. There is no question of trying to take short cuts in achieving unity, but we could maybe open a dialogue by asking ourselves what kind of unity we would like to give to Spiritan formation.

II. Towards what kind of unity in Spiritan formation?

1. Attentive to the present characteristics of our vocation

In fidelity to our Founders, the Spiritan Rule of Life bases the unity of our life on a concept of "Apostolic Life" in which we identify with Christ in his own mission. For us, the values of religious and community life, as well as those of the apostolate, are integrated in the dynamics of this consecration. These values are developed from the beginning of formation according to certain characteristics that remain always for us an object of research and conversion.

Let us consider three characteristics of Mission that are particularly important. How does our formation prepare us to live them?

a) Solidarity with the poor and oppressed is our first means of entering into the mission that Jesus received from his Father (Lk 4:18-19, SRL 1). Is it possible, asked one of our novice masters, that Spiritans, many of whom come from underprivileged backgrounds, should find themselves obliged, through their formation, to say goodbye to the world of poverty?

Isn't a real contact with the poor, during the whole period of formation, the best way of hearing their cry as Christ hears it? Are not the poor the ones who can best teach us the true meaning of asceticism and detachment in a world that alienates people? Should we, then, set up our houses of formation in the middle of deprived areas and shanty towns? Some have in fact risked this option, which has its advantages and disadvantages. Whatever the reply may be, we should seek a real and concrete proximity and solidarity with the poor. One way is for us to learn to live within the limits of a tight budget, to submit to the law of manual labour, to analyse the reality of the milieu in which we live (Justice and Peace pro-

b) Mission in union with all the members of the People of God

Many questions remain open under this heading: How can our formation teach us to recognize and activate the charisms of the faithful? How does it prepare us to promote a new type of Church in which all are the People of God, men and women, priests and laity? And how can we structure our formation so that lay persons can have a part to play in it, either to be trained along with Spiritans or as part of the team of formators? The present openness of the Congregation to different forms of association with lay persons is a grace that can help us in this research.

c) One of the fundamental aspects of our mission is to promote the incarnation of Christ in the different cultures. It is here that our formation finds justification for its inevitable diversity. It will help us to relativize systems that appear universal and unchangeable, and to become open and tolerant, while having solid instruments for analysis and comparison. The formators insist on the need to be first of all at ease in one's own culture. How are we to reconcile this need with that of progressive openness to intercultural encounter? Learning how to distance oneself critically from one's own culture (and from any dominant culture) is difficult in itself. We should have in common a certain number of instruments of analysis and discernment so as to be able, with their help, to adapt to differences of culture. In the world of today, cultures are increasingly varied, evolving and complex.

Are we willing to work with the local Churches, including in what concerns the methods of formation for Mission? This should be an important characteristic of our desire for inculturation

2. What is the role of the "apostolic experience" in formation?

The integration of the "apostolic experience" needs to be better understood and achieved; it presupposes a minimum of common options.

We are discovering more and more the need to build our spirituality, theology and missionary practice on the concrete local conditions of mission. There is a close link, therefore, between apostolic commitments and formation (the success of ongoing formation will depend afterwards on the aptitude that one has acquired for drawing lessons from experience). It is a question of gradually building a synthesis in our life of the things that make up the essence of our vocation. In any case, formation cannot be reduced to the acquisition of academic knowledge.

a) The "overseas training program"

Most circumscriptions feel that the integration of the different aspects of Spiritan life require a two- or three-year period of practical apostolic experience during the time of formation. Some place this period before the novitiate and stress its role in the discernment of a vocation. Most put it after the novitiate, just before or even during theology.

In any case, we can distinguish the periods before, during and after the practical experience. The period leading up to it should provide adequate preparation: anthropological, theological and spiritual. The experience itself should be a time of both apostolic work and formation, and should provide a method of personal, social and theological analysis of the experience. It should have its specific "accompanying guides": a welcoming community and persons named to be in contact with both the student being trained and his team of formators. The period after the experience should permit reflection and growth as a result of it, and psychological and spiritual integration of the "cultural shock".

The experience, at all events, should not be simply a parenthesis in the period of formation, left to haphazard initiatives. We think that every Spiritan should have the opportunity, during his period of formation, of an apostolic experience in another culture (which does not necessarily mean in another country), with the need to learn other modes of expression, if not another language.

b) Apostolic activity during the time of study

During the years reserved to study, even though the opportunities for apostolate are reduced, the importance of being rooted in reality and experience should be a common characteristic of Spiritan formation. This can be realized through various pastoral activities in a concrete ecclesial or human community. The students should be able to play an active role in this group, sharing its apostolic reflection, ministry and prayer. The formation community as a whole should be engaged in this, and not merely isolated individuals

So that our life and activity may be "of Christ" (cf. SRL 101)

Secular culture would have us judge every commitment on the basis of tangible results and efficacy. Our formation, on the other hand, does not limit itself to turning out efficient apostolic technicians. Our meetings with students, our presence on occasions like professions and ordinations, our visits to houses of formation have confirmed our perception that the priority is one's receptivity to the free gift of God, one's desire to share in the Paschal Mystery, which is essential for the coming of the Kingdom. Perhaps there is still some way to go before these dispositions become rooted in a personal and community life that bears still greater witness to our "apostolic consecration". Let us consider two conditions for this:

a) Progress in the understanding of our vows

We can touch only briefly on the vows here, but we can at least say this: the manner in which our formation communities bring out the Spiritan way of living Chastity, Poverty and Obedience is decisive in developing a common approach to Mission.

One can grow in **Chastity** during the years of formation thanks in particular to community and apostolic relations: chastity that is lived in a positive way helps one to avoid shutting oneself up in a purely intellectual and volontaristic perspective and enables one to relate to others in a caring, kind and compassionate way. There could be a danger, during formation, of developing cerebral personalities, invulnerable even to friendship, incapable of interpersonal relationships and collaboration. But formation that gives proper weight to the "affective" dimension is a difficult challenge: it entails the deliberate and conscious choice of celibacy for the Kingdom.

Poverty is not a sentimental dream: it is one of the great problems of our time. For us it means, first of all, a practical solidarity with the poor, in union with Christ, to the point of giving our life for them. We have already mentioned its importance, which was also very strongly stressed by our Founders. For Libermann, only genuine poverty on our part could deserve the trust of the poor. A lot still needs to be done to discover a Spiritan way of living poverty which would correspond to the needs of our time.

Spiritan **Obedience** implies availability for different kinds of Mission. Each one's personal vocation develops through identification with the life of the Congregation and of the whole Church, with which one becomes more and more closely bound. Our Spiritan program of life, including, as it does, close links with our religious community and with various other groups, accustoms us to going outside of ourselves to make contact with others and discern our way along with them. How can we best learn to accept the resulting tensions and so develop a truly apostolic spirit of obedience?

b) Concern for persons

The unity of one's "Spiritan existence" is built up slowly in stages that must be respected and in the mystery of a personal journey in the course of which some guidance may be necessary for the discernment of one's path.

i. Stages to be respected

The stages of our formation follow those proposed by the Church, with all the riches of the reflection that has taken place since the Council. We can profit by cooperating with other institutes and local seminaries in giving greater precision and harmony to these stages. Various directories and guidelines have been drawn up, to which we may refer while adapting them to our specific vocation and to local conditions.

- In the pre-novitiate period the stress should be on trying to lay the foundations of personal integration of life and on developing the **human qualities** of the apostle. The candidate should examine his vocation and see whether it corresponds to the Spiritan charism. In many circumscriptions this pre-novitiate period is something new: we should try to arrive together at a better understanding of how to make the most of this period.
- In the novitiate, stress is laid rather on the supernatural aspect, on the fact that it is God who consecrates us and sends us on his mission. The novitiate ends with a real "consecration to the apostolate" which gives it its particular character. It is especially urgent that we should share and deepen our understanding of this essential stage of formation.
- The years of theology (or the immediate post-novitiate years for Brothers) are those of more professional training as apostles, whether as priests or as consecrated laymen. In this period stress is laid on the mission of the consecrated person. Regional meetings of formators would be particularly useful for im-

proving the quality of formation during this period. It is also the best period for experiments in international formation.

ii. An "accompaniment" permitting unification of life

The different stages of formation all have the same aim of progressively developing the unity of the person, so that he may respond fully to his vocation in the Congregation. In each of the stages there should be close links between apostolate, theological reflection, spiritual life and community life.

In fact, it will not be easy for the candidate to achieve such a unity. On his own he would find it difficult to integrate the various experiences that he has in his prayer, his classes, his apostolic work and his community. Sometimes the teachers and other people that he encounters in the course of his formation do not have enough opportunity to meet. It is important, therefore, for the student to have certain "accompanying guides" to help him attain the desired integration.

Among these accompanying guides, the spiritual director has an indispensable role to play. It is he that will best be able to help him see the close links that exist between the various elements in an at times complex formation. For conversion is at once spiritual, moral and intellectual. The spiritual director will help him discern the mystery of his individual vocation – a road proper to him which the Holy Spirit invites him to follow and which he embarks on with full liberty and in a spirit of service.

The formators of several regions have placed this question of "accompaniment" among their top priorities. It will be interesting to hear their reflections on it

III. The training of formators - an urgent missionary need

So as to be equipped for their "mission" in formation, formators rightly request a time of preparation during which they will receive specific training for the task. They should also have had missionary experience long enough to have enabled them to integrate in their own lives the essential dimensions of the Spiritan vocation.

Preparation will also entail long-term planning so that suitable university training will be given to likely candidates in a variety of subjects. At the moment, with the large number of houses of formation, we can barely respond to the needs. A first stage would be to draw up a list of confreres who have been trained for posts in formation but who are otherwise employed, and a list of confreres employed in formation but who would need time out in order to acquire a particular qualification.

Academic qualifications are not in themselves sufficient. A formator's task is a specialized one requiring specific training. In several local Churches there are training programs for formators which we are not sufficiently aware of, and it would be a good thing if Spiritans at a regional level could set up similar training programs. These would deal with such questions as how to acquire a deeper knowledge of Spiritans as how to acquire a deeper knowledge of Spiritans.

tan spirituality, how to place this knowledge in the context of present theological research on Mission, religious life and community life, and how to prepare formators for service in transcultural and international situations.

The General Council, for its part, would like to play a role in this ongoing formation and in promoting the "dynamism and unity" of Spiritan formation by organizing suitable meetings. These meetings should help us to a better understanding and application of the main lines of our Rule of Life by confronting them with concrete situations. The novice masters will be meeting in Dublin in July 1989, and in July 1991 there will be a meeting of representatives of formators from all Spiritan regions. The agenda for it will be drawn up in 1990 on the basis of suggestions expressed by the regions.

Through these meetings and the initiatives that will spring from them, and with the help also of your reactions to the questions raised in this I/D, we will proceed along the way that our Rule of Life has clearly indicated. The future of our service to the Mission, and no doubt also the readiness of young men to join us will depend on our success in this

I/D 45

THE GENERALATE TEAM

November 1989

The Foundations – a Challenge to the Congregation

1. Introduction

In 1977, 69 out of 237 members in formation (29%) were from the southern hemisphere. Last year 374 out of 532 (70%) were from the south, as well as 90% of the additional 101 postulants. At the present rate of growth, it would seem that members from the Foundations and young Provinces will form close to 50% of the active membership by the General Chapter of 2004, barely 15 years away.

"We who come from different cultures, continents and nations, and who have different outlooks, are brought together by the Spirit of Pentecost into one larger community, the Congregation. Cultural diversity is welcomed as a positive factor. Our unity bears witness to reconciliation in Christ" (Spiritan Rule of Life, 37).

The influx of confreres from the Foundations has changed the face of mission and in a certain sense brought it to term. The evangelized are

taking their place as evangelizers side by side with confreres from the older Provinces of Europe and America. The Congregation at large is being invited to "widen the space of your tent, extend the curtains of your home, do not hold back" (ls. 54:2).

The Enlarged General Council (Arusha, Tanzania, 8-20 May 1989) considered aspects of our common solidarity in mission, and how best to affirm the values, goals and aspirations of various groups in the Congregation, harnessing them for the enrichment of all. The EGC of 1978 considered the Foundations, and in 1980, for the first time, a General Chapter document of the Congregation devoted a section to them. The Arusha EGC was, however, the first detailed stock-taking in which delegates representing the entire Congregation sat with the General Council to consider the concrete implications of the Foundations, evaluate progress, listen to human problems, and map out orientations for the future.

2. The Search for Identity

2.1 Religious-missionary vocations from local Churches

Foundations, like the older Provinces, take their identity from the local Church and from the charism of the Institute. Just as the Universal Church exists embodied in each particular and local Church, so also each Province or Foundation is a particular expression of the Spiritan vocation with roots in a local Church. Members of the Foundations and young Provinces are to feel at home and grow in the Spiritan family in harmony with their own background and culture (Chapter 1980: Spiritan Life, 108). Congregation and local Church enrich each other: the Congregation offers the local Church its religious missionary charism for mission; rooting in local Churches affords it new expressions of religious

and apostolic life while renewing its membership (cf. SL 123).

The Congregation made a beginning with Foundations in 1953 (the term "Foundation" itself came much later) when a Juniorate was opened in Ihiala, Nigeria. Trinidad was set up as a Vice-Province, with its own scholasticate, in 1961, after 28 Trinidadians had been ordained abroad, and became the first southern-hemisphere Province in 1968. The attempt in the 60's to establish indigenous formation in Ontario later developed into the Province of TransCanada. In the early 70's, Foundations were created in Angola, East Africa and Brazil; in the late 70's in Puerto Rico, Central Africa, West Africa, Southern Africa, the Indian Ocean. In the last few years, beginnings have been made

in Zaire (1986), Mexico, Australia and Papua New Guinea, and Haiti, where, since the return, formation structures have been set up.

The principle of rooting within local Churches leads to a certain tension between mission and 'home-base". All Spiritans are for mission – difficult and urgent pastoral situations, the poor and oppressed, especially transcultural mission. Some Foundations have thus sent most of their members to other countries and cultures. the other hand, vocations often grow because there are indigenous members to identify with, the work itself of vocations and formation requires some indigenous input as well as the setting up of a self-reliant network for the care of missionaries and mission projects, the sick and aged... For these necessary works, Foundations retain some of their members or recall some after only a short period on mission. The delegates at Arusha considered that tension would diminish if the principle were established that in normal circumstances first appointments would last for at least three years. Agreement of the General Council and of the two Superiors concerned would be required to recall or transfer one on first appointment before the three years expired.

2.2 Mission - Different Approaches

"Our practice of religious life takes on different forms among different peoples or in various cultures" (SRL 55).

"The intention is not to form a 'block', rather it is a question of a different approach to mission" (Indian Ocean Foundation team in PNG).

The gifts of faith and love call for gratitude; one way of expressing gratitude is by handing on the faith. The missionary Church is missionary by her very nature (AG 2). "The heavens declare the glory of God... day discourses of it to day, night to night hands on the knowledge" (Ps. 19:1-2). Missionaries bring with them the riches (and sometimes also some of the failings) of their local Church. Missionaries from South to South may be better able to help their people take on greater responsibility for their Church. They may be a bridge helping people to accept and work well with their own clergy and other pastoral workers.

A confrere in Brazil writes: "Our formation, whether we like it or not, makes candidates, many of whom are of popular origin, pass through a process of secularization and a loss of culture, and introduces them to a secure life ..." In Latin America, there is a search for a new way of being Church, and a religious life nourished from the same popular religiosity and inserted within the same conditions of life as the majority of the poor. The Latin American approach is a variation on a common theme in the houndations.

2.3 The Treasure of the Nations (cf. I/D 25, Feb. 1980)

More than ever before, we appreciate the Christian originality of different local Churches. Latin America, for example, is enriching the entire Church with her basic communities and theology of liberation, her commitment to the poor and sense of popular religion. Africa is beginning to share her sense of God, her enthusiasm for the Bible, her strong sense of community and celebration, her involvement of the laity in mission and pastoral work. Asia is contributing her sense of the sacred, her love of silence and contemplation, her tried methods of asceticism. The older Christian traditions of Europe and America present to the younger Churches a long history of missionary zeal, models for faith seeking understanding, various currents of Christian spirituality, approaches to the challenge of "modernity" and a patrimony of Christian saints, men and women who bore courageous witness before the challenges of their own times.

2.4 Preserving Identity

Identity should find some expression in a mission project. A Foundation loses identity and would become a structure for formation alone if all those who have completed formation were distributed in the Districts. It is therefore recommended that each Foundation and young Province have at least one mission specific to it. Care will be taken as soon as possible to train indigenous formators, for these will more easily inculturate formation, embedding it in the deep values of their people.

"Migration" is a problem which some Foundations face; that is, students are continually on the move from one house of formation to another located in different countries. As a result, some never have the rooting of a period of formation "at home". The Saverne meeting (June 1986) of African Foundations and Provinces suggested that, to the extent possible, Postulancy and the First Cycle should be "at home", a suggestion to be applied with great flexibility given the complexities of the situation and the shortage of means and personnel.

There have been regroupings for formation in order to save costs and avail better of scarce personnel. Nigeria Province and the West African Foundation collaborate in theology; Zaire shares philosophy and theology with the Central African Foundation; Angola has all its own structures of formation but sends some students in the Second Cycle to the theologate in Brazzaville (FAC). France and USA/E collaborate with Haiti; Switzerland (previously England) shares its theologate with the Indian Ocean Foundation. There could perhaps be greater ex-

of different nations and cultures, such that members of the Foundations live interculturality right from the start. Both during O.T.P./Prefecting and on the mission, members of the Foundations now live side by side with members of the Districts. Increasingly, apostolic groups and the Districts themselves are becoming multi-cultural.

The question was therefore asked whether Districts will have to dissolve whenever a Foundation becomes a Province, or what shall be the Two models have model of relationships. emerged. In one model, there is a fusion of circumscriptions to create one Province (Angola, the forthcoming Brazilian Province). Members of the District opt for the new Province, either as Province of Origin or as Province of Appointment (SRL 159.2 and 160.3). In the other model, the District does not cease to exist as a jurisdiction; it retains its mission project while supporting the initiatives of the new Province (Nigeria, East African Province). These models came to be through discussions between the concerned parties in dialogue with the General Council; within each model concrete differences exist.

Communion will be better fostered if care is taken right at the start of a Foundation to involve all members of the District(s); it is not an affair of Superiors and Formators alone. Recruiting, screening, apostolic work, prefect-

ing/O.T.P., holidays are some of the opportunities for involving members of the District(s) in the development of a Foundation; they also make for fraternal contacts between them and the members of the Foundation. After the emergence of a new Province, frequent meetings of the Superiors concerned will ensure that Spiritan presence and apostolate in any area is planned in common.

Looking towards the future, most of the delegates at Arusha expressed the wish that, wherever possible, only one Spiritan circumscription be established in any given area. In its animation, the General Council will incline towards this while continuing as before to listen carefully to all concerned. Formal cooperation in the apostolate is certainly a requirement of mission and helps our internal unity. However, without a conversion of heart structures alone will not produce unity, hence the need for intercultural understanding.

4.2 Questions for Reflection

- Q.3 In what concrete ways may we promote the bonds which unite all Spiritans?
- Q.4 How may the structures evolve in order to take account of the new realities described?

5. Intercultural Understanding and Communication

The mass media, especially the television, bring home to us the various ways of being of different peoples. Multinational companies deal every day with cultural questions. They train staff to work in foreign cultures; they develop cultural criteria for production, sales and relations among personnel. There has never been such a movement of peoples as in recent years; most mega-cities have become microcosms with a plethora of cultures.

As missionaries we often find ourselves in transcultural situations; we have to learn to relate to, and work with, people different from us. Some of our communities are multi-cultural. Experience with the Foundations has underlined these factors and helped to alert the Congregation to intercultural problems and possibilities, making it pose more insistently for itself questions being posed in this area all over the world.

Cultures are different not only on the level of customs and usages but also in ways of experiencing deeper human desires and quests. Persons and groups have their particular histories of sin and grace, their lawful goals and aspirations.

Some of our circumscriptions have members belonging to different cultural/national groups; in some the larger part of the membership belongs to one cultural group. An atmosphere of fraternal love and dialogue enables group "feelings" to be expressed and dealt with in the context of communion. Christ "the peace between us has made the two into one..." (Eph. 2:14). We all serve the mission of the Church, which in Christ is a sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all humankind; also an instrument for the achievement of such union and unity (*LG*, 1).

True intercultural community will require constant re-examination of our group attitudes. Intercultural understanding and communication will become increasingly necessary to our life and mission. Superiors, as "men of dialogue" (SRL 47.2), need to acquire such skills; our communities will need structures for cultural dialogue. Familiarity with one another's languages and cultures becomes more necessary (at least the main languages of the Congregation). Confreres and circumscriptions are invited to invest more in this area. The General Council recommends the training of some confreres in questions of culture and intercultural relationships.

changes in formation between the European and North American Provinces and the Foundations.

Number is another aspect of identity: at the point of becoming a Province, a Foundation would normally have that proportion of indigenous members to give it local colour and assure their equitable participation in decision-making.

2.5 Questions for Reflection

- Q.1 In what ways may the Foundations contribute to the new image of mission?
- Q.2 How far have we succeeded in effecting a meeting of faith and culture in the Foundations and elsewhere? (SRL 16.1).

3. Transition to Province Status

A Foundation is initially placed under the care of a number of Principal Superiors who act collegially. Some Foundations and emerging groups are, however, cared for by one District or circumscription.

In the name of the Congregation, the General Council thanks the Superiors of Districts who have added the care of the Foundations to their normal duties. We thank also the formators who have built solid foundations, and all who in one way or another have contributed to the upbuilding of the Foundations.

When the Foundation has reached a certain maturity, a Major Superior is appointed for it, and has a Council chosen according to the Spiritan Rule of Life. It will be ready to advance to Province status when:

- there are at least 15-30 finally professed members;
- there is a sufficient number of indigenous formators;
- necessary administrative structures are availa-

ble, and there are sufficient numbers with mission experience to fulfil administrative tasks;

- in a survey of indigenous members, about two thirds are in favour of a transition into one or more Provinces;
- a mission project has been worked out in dialogue with the General Council to ensure both a mission "ad extra" and a "home-base";
- a mission "ad extra" and a "home-base";
 the new Province by its own effort can meet at least 50% of its running costs; it is presumed that structures are in place;
- relationships have been agreed with the Superiors of neighbouring circumscriptions (in dialogue with the General Council) to take account of both the identity of the new Province and the unity of the Congregation.

The statutes of the new Province may be established before erection or, if not, at the first Chapter of the Province.

The above "orientations" were given by delegates at Arusha. They are very flexible and leave the General Council room for concrete decisions, in each case in dialogue with Superiors and all concerned.

4. Search for the Unity of Spiritan Apostolic Life

"Greater diversity in living the Spiritan vocation will make urgent a clearer definition of the essential links which bind us all together" (I/D 41, April 1986).

4.1 Spiritans are united in "apostolic life" (SRL 3), in the common dedication to the "poor", in readiness for tasks for which the Church has difficulty in finding workers (SRL 4), in the common project of the Congregation (SRL 55). Regions are structures of unity; so are meetings on various levels, especially those which would unite North and South (for example, the recent meeting of directors of novices: Dublin, July 1989).

Partnership in the apostolate is another aspect of unity. Just as members of the Districts devoted themselves to the development of the Foundations, so also now some members of Foundations cooperate in the mission project of the Districts. In some places, however, the pro-

ject of the District(s) and that of the Foundation overlap. In such cases, it would seem desirable that works gradually converge towards one mission project.

A novel situation is that in which members of the Foundations are engaged on certain projects (involving a District) for which a Foundation feels in some way responsible under the authority of the District. Such projects are usually elaborated in dialogue between the local Church, the District Superior and the Superior of the Foundation. Members of Foundations engaged on such projects belong fully to the District, nevertheless their particular situation requires clear guidelines to be drawn up by the Superiors concerned in dialogue with the General Council.

Multi-cultural communities and circumscriptions exist in parts of the Congregation. The Foundations are themselves usually an amalgam

6. The Need for Solidarity

"Share one another's burdens and you will fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Our decentralized Congregation worked well as long as Provinces had enough people in formation to assure the continuance of their "works". Some older Provinces seem no longer in this position; some are calling for a "refoundation". The Foundations have grown partly through the solidarity of the entire Congregation. They are full of vitality, having many vocations, and are looking for mission projects. The needs of young and old call for structures of solidarity.

Financial solidarity has been increasing in the Congregation. Cor Unum distribution this year amounted to \$943,176, over 60% of which went to the Foundations and young Provinces. However, only about half of their requests could be met.

"Because we are members of one single missionary family, we take upon ourselves in solidarity responsibility for the Congregation's projects and priorities" (SRL, 21).

The Foundations were a big preoccupation of the last General Chapter. None of them has as yet a Capital Fund; most have no sickness or old-age insurance, and are unable to provide for their missionaries. In short, they depend for the most part on the solidarity of the Congregation. On the other hand, some Provinces have ample reserves; the situation calls for a more equitable distribution. The General Council is encouraged by the response to its call that five per cent of reserves be made available for the increasing costs of formation, especially in the Foundations.

Each Foundation has been given the task of evolving a plan for self-reliance within a reasonable period. Delegates at Arusha called for a coherent financial plan for the whole Congregation, a plan with channels to bridge the gap between rich and poor circumscriptions.

Personnel for formation is another area calling for solidarity. Over the next three years, the Foundations require 10 formators for pre-novitiates, 18 for First Cycle, 16 for novitiates, 3 supervisors for O.T.P./Prefecting, and 20 for theology – in all 67.

If the Congregation is to respond adequately, there may be need to establish a pool of trained manpower. In the meantime, suitable confreres looking for assignment are requested to consider the Foundations.

In solidarity, members of the Foundations will interest themselves in the "refoundation" of the older Provinces.

Delegates at Arusha requested the General Council to weight representation at the coming General Chapter in favour of the Foundations and young Provinces – this in deference to present trends in vocations. The General Council will have to devise a system which will take account of this while assuring equitable representation of the older Provinces.

6.1 Question for Reflection

Q.5 How may the Foundations participate in mission in the northern hemisphere and in the renewal of some of the older Provinces?

7. The Criterion of Mission

Our common commitment to evangelization relativizes somewhat the search for identity and for unity in Spiritan apostolic life. Since mission is our goal, we choose the structures (distribution of various circumscriptions, types of community whether multi-cultural or not, various models of relationships...) in order to advance that mission of the Church in which we participate, a mission which for us is true worship offered to God in the Spirit (SRL 87, cf. Rom. 1:9).

Whether in the Northern or in the Southern Hemisphere, the missionary should be careful not to establish a Unurch copied from the Church of another cultural background, but an indigenous Church (CDD, 419; SRL 16.2). He adapts to the life and culture of the people among whom he works; he identifies with their goals and aspirations.

Our missionaries who have laboured to establish the Foundations are justly happy to see them grow towards Provincial status. For them, this is a reward of labour. Their continued presence and commitment communicates the solidarity of the entire Congregation. In an apostolic spirit they are ready for the adaptations which may be necessary. New Foundations will my their best to assure the community

of those works of the Districts which are in accord with present Spiritan options in the area, without prejudice to any new initiatives they may wish to take.

7.1 Question for reflection

Q.6 How far do we as missionaries really identify with the people and their aspirations?

8. Conclusion: United in Mission

The decision to hold the Enlarged General Council in Arusha was a symbolic gesture. It was a call for a broadening of horizons and a change of mentality. The Churches of the southern hemisphere are bringing forth fresh but different expressions of our common faith. Within the Spiritan family, the Foundations and young Provinces seek to incarnate these diverse

expressions in the unity of our Spiritan apostolic life. We encourage them and give them a pledge of mutual respect and recognition, of solidarity and sharing of gifts. The challenge now is to work side by side as equal partners in the accomplishment of the one mission which has been entrusted to us.

References

AG - Ad Gentes - Vat. II Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity.

CDD – 1968 General Chapter Directives and Decisions.

LG – Lumen Gentium – Vat. II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

SL - Spiritan Life - 1980 General Chapter. SRL - Spiritan Rule of Life - 1986 Constitution.

(The Draft was prepared by Fr. J. C. Okoye, Councillor responsible for Foundations, and discussed, amended and approved by the General Council.)



I/D 46

THE GENERALATE TEAM

November 1990

MISSION AND DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE WITH NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

The General Council considers Dialogue, which is one of the key words in the Church's understanding of Mission, as an important theme in its animation. Two successive I/Ds will treat of this subject: "Dialogue with non-Christian religions" and "Dialogue with the Modern World". An I/D on Ecumenical Dialogue will be considered later, while one on Dialogue with Traditional Religions would be more easily drawn up after the meeting on First Evangelization which will be held at Chevilly in November 1991.

We try in dialogue to cooperate honestly with the leaders and the faithful of other religions as well as with those who do not believe in God. We put our trust in the Holy Spirit, leading both us and them "to the complete truth" (John 16:13) SRL 16.3.

In September 1990, with the Gulf crisis already underway, leaders from most of the world religions met at Bari, Italy, to continue the joint Prayer for Peace begun by the Pope at Assisi in November 1986. (Two similar meetings had since been held, in Rome and Warsaw.) The religious leaders appealed to the deepest spiritual motives of all men and women, and especially of political leaders, to try to avoid war. And it may be noted that ambassadors of nations as different as China, the USSR and the United States had made a point of attending, thus recognizing the "strength in weakness" of religion.

This example shows that collaboration and dialogue between religions is a "sign of the times", in which we should recognize a call from the Holy Spirit to the world of today.

An aptitude for dialogue is, for many of our contemporaries, a criterion of credibility for the religions, so often accused of having been the cause of the bloody confrontations that have divided peoples in the course of history.

In the different countries in which we take part in Mission, we cannot content ourselves with being spectators of conflicts in which religious motives often play an important part. Even if our willingness to dialogue is not always reciprocated, and if theological reflection on the subject is still tentative, let us not be afraid to make concrete and prophetic gestures of dialogue. "Every meeting is already an achievement," said some lay people engaged in dialogue here in Rome, "for it means that one does not consider oneself self-sufficient"; it makes us more receptive to the Holy Spirit.

A missionary institute like ours, "a watchman who looks beyond frontiers" (editorial of the French Province's newsletter, September 1990), has a special responsibility to help believers to look at each other in a new way, and this is without doubt one of the most urgent tasks of its mission today.

I. A relationship between believers

Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, said recently that the real problem of dialogue was differences about fundamentals. It is obvious, therefore, that interreligious dialogue is particularly difficult. In spite of the difficulties, one could look upon the diversity of religions not as a scandal but rather as a reality permitted by God for the good of all believers. It is in this spirit that Muslims interpret the verse in the

Koran that says: "If God had so wished, he could have made us all one people, but he did not wish to, so as to test us."

a) Mutual questioning and a deepening of faith

Questioning

The interlocutor in dialogue, especially when he believes in one God, goes immediately to the essential questions: "Who or what is your God? What is your attitude to him (your religion)?" "From where does your Revelation come? You say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and is himself God - explain what you mean by this."

An atheist might put the same questions, but one who believes in another religion would take his stand from the start on the ground of his own faith and his own experience of God. At the same time, he might not have the same conception of dialogue as we do.

The searching questions put by such an interlocutor will sound out, at one time or another, all the details of our creed, our most strongly held theological positions, the most fundamental ethical norms drawn from them, and also the juridical principles that we claim are based on the Gospel.

Archbishop Tessier of Algiers, Algeria, has said that "the doctrinal challenge of Christianity to Islam is a serious one, because it rests on heights that seem untouchable to many". Ali Merad, in a courageous study on Jesus in Islam, recognizes that the Koran itself asks questions to which Islam has not yet been able to reply.

Deepening of faith

Confreres living in Islamic milieus have told us how they have come to a deeper understanding of God's transcendence and of the obedience and "submission" due to him. They have also rediscovered humble prayer and the meaning of asceticism. Conversely, we have been told in Senegal of young Muslims who, for their part, wish to live with "the spirit of Jesus".

Missionaries in contact with Islam or Hinduism have better appreciated the revelation of the Mystery of the Trinity, and rediscovered joy in the tenderness of the Father, the humanity of God in the Son, and Love in the Spirit. (Many Christians seem to content themselves with a vague theism, based more on religious sentiment than on faith.)

Likewise, some religious Muslims, when they come into contact with Christianity, have been led to reflect more deeply on the mystery of the Divine Oneness, which is the centre of their faith. This cannot, in fact, to quote

from the conclusions of an Islamo-Christian research group, "be reduced to a mathematical symbol or a deduction from reason". They reached this conclusion in virtue of "the very mystery of God, which is so striking in the Koran and so keenly experienced by Muslim mystics".

b) A purifying trial

The practice of dialogue keeps us from taking refuge in hypocritical or worn-out practices. Every religious attitude becomes the object of comparisons that are sometimes aggressive, sometimes sympathetic, often silent but heavy with meaning: "What is your prayer like? Your asceticism? Your fasting? What do you understand by charity?" - are some of the questions put to us.

It is in the area of fraternal relations that dialogue is sometimes seen as a particularly difficult trial:

There may be painful experiences in a friendship that springs up between people of different faiths who are brought together by their work, for instance - a friendship that can be truly deep and sincere, but which runs into problems based on religion. How many of our confreres have been told by Muslim friends that these were sorry that they would not meet them again in Paradise, as this was closed to Christians? "It is a great sorrow," a confrere told us, "not to be able to share with our friends in the same community of faith and in the things that we hold dearest. This suffering is often physically expressed when, in the course of a fraternal gathering, one must separate and go each to one's own place of prayer with one's own community of faith."

It happens, too, that the believer, precisely because of the faith he holds, is tempted at times to "force" the rights that friendship gives him over his brother or sister of another faith.

The test comes when one or other interlocutor allows a will to power to take over. There is always a risk of dialogue becoming confrontation, when it is invaded by apologetics or proselytism, or a wish to triumph over another's freedom.

We often accuse other believers of provoking such pain, but we seem to have difficulty in realizing how often we ourselves are guilty, in so many ways, of offending others by words and attitudes that we might hardly even be aware of.

However, at times these very situations of trial give rise to new bonds of friendship and bring persons of different faiths even closer together. In one of our missions, Christians had been the victims of an attack on the part of some fanatics. Their coreligionists, humiliated by the image given of their community, took steps to make amends, and from these gestures of friendship many things began to change.

II. An opportunity to renew Mission

Our Rule of Life (13.1 and 16.3) stresses briefly but forcefully the importance of interreligious dialogue for Mission today. It gives its theological reason and mentions the levels of its application in practice:

a) The Holy Spirit leads us all towards the complete truth (Jn 16:13)

This phrase of St. John's recalls God's attitude towards humankind throughout the course of history, in the building up of his Kingdom. God, who wants everyone to be saved and to reach full knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), has acted through his grace in the minds and hearts of all, so that they might feel their way towards him and succeed in finding him (Acts 17:27). And this grace not only reaches men and women as individuals, but can be mediated to a certain extent through the different religions.

For Christians, "dialogue presupposes a belief in the saving presence of God in other religions, and expresses the firm hope of their fulfilment in Christ" (Bishops of India, 1977).

At the same time, dialogue means listening humbly to the word that God wants to speak to us when we discover that other sincere believers have a quite different approach to his Mystery.

We have seen above how practical engagement in dialogue brings difficulties with it, but also its own special graces.

b) With the leaders and the faithful of other religions (SRL 16.3)

Dialogue with other religions is an Initiative that is both Individual and on a Community level.

It supposes on the one hand a great freedom given to each one (freedom in the Spirit) to explore roads not signposted in advance. It also requires that the community as such should be engaged, setting up meeting places and the contacts from which dialogue will grow. All our confreres who are engaged in dialogue with other religions stress the fact that there is little future in it if it is not based on communities. For this, however, the communities should adopt a pastoral approach that is a rediscovery of evangelical simplicity, as lived by Jesus and his disciples, as they take part in their various meetings and events, and face up to the problems that arise. At times there is a certain selfishness in Christian communities, which refuse dialogue because of reactions that are understandable on the human level but which are hardly evangelical.

We are happy to note that the majority of the initiatives promoted by our confreres in the field of dialogue are firmly rooted in their local and diocesan communities, in spite of the difficulties that arise from time to time. The Asian Bishops recently invited their Christians to take part fully in the social and community life of their region. Religion should not be a divisive factor but rather a help towards living together in a way that brings out the best in each group.

Dialogue concerns religious leaders in particular.

While it is natural that religious leaders should try to promote their own faith, they should at the same time do all they can to build bridges between the different religions.

Leaders of other religions are often more willing than we would imagine to take part in interreligious dialogue and cooperation, and show great openness to a common search for God's plan. In this connection, the Asian Bishops have noted the great effort at "aggiornamento" that Asian religious leaders are making as they grapple with the problems of the modern world.

More and more, religious leaders are realizing the importance of common initiatives that may contribute to the building of a better world. The World Conference of Religions for Peace, inaugurated in 1970, the joint Prayer for Peace at Assisi in 1986 (not to mention important ecumenical meetings on the same theme), are not isolated events: the leaders are aware that the future of religions must rest on a common human foundation and that believers should take part in common initiatives for the preservation of humankind and of the earth's environment.

In the local Churches, this need for dialogue between communities and their leaders has given rise in several places to diocesan commissions, in which Spiritans often play an active role.

In Mauritius, for instance, confreres who saw the need for deeper dialogue with Hinduism and Islam have been able to get their Catholic community also involved in it, though at first there was a certain amount of reticence ("Isn't there enough work to be done in just the Catholic community?"). The three confreres engaged in this work have taken charge of a small parish that gives them an opportunity for a systematic approach to dialogue. They began by learning the local languages and then organized sessions with representatives of the religions, asking them to express their convictions. The process of listening obliged the Catholics to question themselves about God, Jesus Christ and the Church. A second series of sessions was then organized, for the Catholics alone this time, to help them reflect on the questions raised by the previous dialogue.

One can see from this example how dialogue can not only affect our relations with other faiths, but how it can also renew the vitality of Christian communities and help them deepen their knowledge of their own faith. It is an opportunity for the renewal of Mission and of the Church.

III. Dialogue is not be improvised

A confrere who had been appointed as chaplain to a university where the students are for the most part Muslim told us recently how unprepared he felt for the contacts that awaited him.

The same reflection could be made by all those for whom dialogue is not an optional extra but at the very heart of evangelization. Dialogue can become a dialogue of the deaf if the following conditions are not respected:

a) Learn the other's language

Is it not essential to take the time to learn what others say of God in their own words and symbols, so as to understand how they make contact with God? Hard work and patience are required if we are to respect the mystery and the secrets of this undertaking and to gain access to their ways of thinking. But experience shows that, without this preliminary effort, we quickly shut up other believers in their established prejudices and give them no chance of evolving with us.

This is why confreres who have to work in day-to-day contact with members of the great world religions make a point of investing considerable time from the beginning in learning the language and culture in which these people express themselves. And shouldn't the same thing hold for those who have to undertake "first evangelization" among members of traditional religions?

b) Tolerance is not enough

We should also see to it that our dialogue takes place in the best conditions and at its proper level. Invited earlier this year by Nigerian Muslims to take part in a congress on tolerance, Bishop Onaiyekan of Ilorin replied that it would be necessary to go much further than the still too negative concept of tolerance. Real dialogue, he said, means trying to discover the values that we all share. It requires us to set up structures for various forms of collaboration.

c) Go back to the Gospel

Try to enter more fully into the methods that Jesus himself used (a modern way of "putting on Christ"). Jesus was not afraid to face criticism in his contacts with others: with the Canaanite woman, the woman taken in adultery, Zacchaeus, the non-Jews as well as "fundamentalist" Jews... Thus, to the astonishment of his disciples, he was found holding a discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well. Without denying the religious differences that separated Jews and Samaritans, he allowed the woman to make her personal journey of conversion and went on to announce a new cult "in spirit and in truth", which would be good news for all believers.

We should thus re-read the Gospel "in spirit and in truth", not in a spirit of exclusiveness but opening our minds "to every word that comes from the mouth of God". This means that the first form of dialogue should be that of prayer. Prayer alone can enlighten our minds and convert our hearts. "It teaches us non-violence, which is a seed of peace for the human community" (Geffré, Spiritus, no. 106).

To re-read the Gospel means also to realize that dialogue as lived by Christians is rooted not only in the mystery of the Incarnation (which inspires all contacts with others), but also in the Paschal mystery which is its fulfilment. As we have seen, dialogue is a trial which requires us to assume to the full the attitude of the Servant: pardoning the prejudices that are bound to be there and the occasional insults, and refusing every temptation to seek conquest or domination... Is this not to take up one's cross daily and thus cooperate in the work of salvation, which is offered to all?

Conclusion

How are we to make progress, on both sides, on this road of dialogue? Perhaps we could put the following questions to ourselves, both individually and in community?

- 1) What conscious or unconscious prejudices are we able to recognize or discover in ourselves? How can we get a better knowledge of the faiths of others, and help our Christian communities also to attain such knowledge? At the same time, how can we get a deeper knowledge of the originality of the message to which we ourselves bear witness, and progress with other believers in the search for God? (The dialogue of faith.)
- 2) What concrete commitments can we make, in conjunction with those of other faiths, to help build a better world, with respect for life and for all of creation, for the dignity and rights of the human person, for justice and freedom...? (The dialogue of life.)

3) How can we learn to pray still better by enriching ourselves from the spiritual experiences of other believers and giving greater witness to our own life of prayer? How can we realize on a local scale prayer meetings that draw their inspiration from the Assisi "prayer of the religions for peace" and other initiatives of this kind? (The dialogue of prayer.)

Can such initiatives not nourish the enthusiasm of our apostolic life and give us new reasons to hope and believe in those who surround us?

The text of this I/D was drawn up by Frs. François Nicolas and James Okoye, after consultation with confreres engaged in interreligious dialogue. It was then discussed, modified and approved by the General Council.

I/D 47

THE GENERALATE TEAM

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Mission and Dialogue: Dialogue with the Modern World

The crowd jammed around the television set in Abong-Mbang erupted into wild cheering as they saw their hero Roger Milla boot home the first of the goals that sent their beloved Lions into the quarter finals of the World Cup. They were a tiny segment of the estimated 26.5 billion (many enthusiasts tuned in to several, some to all, of the games) who watched the soccer extravaganza on sets ranging from solar-powered in the mountains of Papua New Guinea to high definition screens in Rome's Hilton Hotel. Even the Pope altered his schedule to adapt to the reality. Both the instant diffusion of information and the very medium through which this is achieved are characteristics of, and contributors to, the structures of the global village.

At about the same time that Roger was scoring his goal, Raimundo Vitor de Oliveira was born in a modest home on Rua dos Junquilos in São Paolo. He doesn't know it yet, but by the year 2010 he will be one of the predicted 24.9 million people searching for sustenance in the city of his birth. Nor will São Paolo be the largest conurbation; Mexico City is expected to have grown to 32.1 million, with Shanghai and Beijing not far behind. The move towards the cities seems to be inexorable and the exploding population is a fact of modern life, a fact that, like it or not, will continue to be a major concern for political, economic and religious leaders. It, too, is part of the contemporary scene and a challenge. How does one proclaim the good news in a city of thirty-two million people, the majority of whom are below the poverty line?

In Berlin, Tobias Pinieks lives in a room overlooking Bornholmer Street, which until recently had been a deserted blind alley ending at the "Wall". Now that the Wall has gone, he wanders freely in the area that for years was a heavily mined no-man's-land. The destruction of the Wall symbolised the collapse of an ideology. The critique of ideologies long held sacred, and even the questioning of their very relevance, is an aspect of modernity.

On Wednesday, March 14th, 1990, Faleh Mohammed Hussein Ali read from the Kor'an as part of an interfaith service at the Royal College of Surgeons,

Dublin. He was joined by Jews, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs, all reading from their sacred books and all praying together in a service that reflected on the sanctity of life. The fact that it was the first time that Faleh Mohammed joined in prayer with other religions added to the significance of the occasion. Interfaith dialogue is becoming a characteristic of the modern world.

The modern world: a cultural reality

The Christian message is not bound to any particular culture. It is potentially universal. It can both challenge and be assimilated by any culture without destroying either the message or the culture.

The values introduced by modernity invite the Church to rethink the presentation of the Gospel message in a manner that will enable genuine contact with modern men and women. The task of evangelisation cannot limit itself to a simple adaptation of the expressions of Faith, such as are contained in rituals, liturgy, external signs, structures and sources of authority. It must go deeper, promoting committed and alert dialogue between the Church and the modern world in a "God-language" that can be understood. As the members of the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 put it in their Message to the People of God: "The Council had been convoked to promote renewal of the Church with a view to evangelising a radically changed world" (Sec. IV).

Some characteristics of modernity

Technology, however primitive, has always played a part in the human condition. In the past it has tended to develop at a leisurely pace. In the world of today, however, the rate of progress has quickened enormously. One has only to think of the dependence on computers, the breakthroughs in the biotechnical field, global communications, the information explosion, nuclear power and transportation facilities (to mention but a few) to realise that the human being is immersed in a sea of technology. This is most evident

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in, but by no means confined to, the western world. Sophisticated technology has penetrated even the most remote areas and is sometimes the factor permitting contact, for better or for worse, with peoples otherwise out of reach. Technology is in itself neutral (a plane can bring relief supplies or drop bombs) and can humanise or destroy, depending on how it is used. One thing is clear, it cannot be ignored.

Religious communities too have felt, with mixed consequences, the impact of rapidly developing technology. Television has assumed a central place in many communities, and in some religious houses mealtimes and hours of prayer are scheduled around the News, often viewed in a stillness more solemn than the former "Great Silence". Evangelisers are part of a world fashioned not only by the content of television but by its very pervasiveness. Television is used beneficially for diffusion of information, recreation, catechetics, and provides for the aged a pleasant way of spending hours that might be otherwise subject to loneliness. It can also become an addiction. Similarly word processors and computers are becoming more and more integral to the organisation of the apostolate and are used positively in the preparation of homilies, the organisation of parishes, religious studies and other aspects of pastoral work. But the computer, too, can become an obsession. And, when considering the impact of technology on religious communities, can one omit reference to the car and the phone with their myriad uses and abuses?

Secularisation and its consequences constitute one of the most direct challenges offered by modernity to evangelisation. Secularisation can be defined as the gradual disintegration of mythical and religious legitimations of society. It is not secularism, which is a type of atheism; nor is it materialism. Secularisation is rather the explanation of the universe through rational and scientific methodology. It does not deny the existence of God but interprets more and more through secondary causes. As Gaudium et Spes puts it: "With the help of science and technology man has extended his mastery over nearly the whole of nature and continues to do so... Many benefits once looked for especially from Heavenly powers, man has now enterprisingly procured for himself".

Some concomitants of secularisation are the privatisation of belief and practice, selectivity and pluralism about doctrines and moral behaviour, questioning of religious institutions and authorities, decreasing religious influence in the public sector and less direct impact by the churches on civil decision-making. Secularisation is challenging us to find a new presence of God, one which penetrates ever more deeply into the realities of creation.

Today the individual receives a flow of information and options to such an extent that it becomes increasingly difficult to give oneself totally and unquestioningly to any institution, system or conceptual framework. Previously accepted "certitudes" are no longer embraced wholeheartedly, and authorities once held

sacrosanct are challenged openly. A consequence of pluralism is that no institution, including Christianity, can dominate a society. The churches find themselves competing with other institutions to gain the ear of modern men and women. If this role is properly understood, accepted and prepared for, evangelisers can become a true leaven in the modern mass.

While the rise of individualism has helped to promote democracy, freedom (including freedom of religion) and human rights, it has also left the door open to the accumulation of power and wealth in the hands of a few. Modern economics seems to be moving towards control by economic "blocs" (Europe, North America, Japan, perhaps later the Pacific Rim) in the determination of which weaker elements of society have virtually no say. Even more destructive can be the multinationals, which owe allegiance to no blocs or national governments but freely transcend all boundaries, including the ethical. The effects of the accumulation of power in the hands of a few has had, and is having, disastrous consequences on poor societies and individuals. The gap between the other great "blocs", the rich North and the poor South, grows ever wider, giving rise to crushing debts, rampant inflation and the deaths of millions annually from famine and preventable childhood diseases. "Progress" has not eliminated selfishness and injustice. Far from it.

Secularisation, while clearing away many false concepts, has also led to a collapse of systems of meaning, symbolic structures, institutional cohesiveness and relationships, especially those of the family. In the modern world, many of the traditional family relationships are coming apart. The extended family is largely a thing of the past, but even the nuclear family composed of mother, father and 2.2 (+ -) children can no longer be presumed. The incidence of single-parent families is rising significantly and in many places is now accepted as relatively normal, as indeed are nonheterosexual unions. All of this has led to alienation and loneliness but also, on the positive side, to a fresh search for new forms of community, the animation of which can be a fruitful apostolate for the modern evangeliser.

Modernity, in its varied expressions is in itself neither totally good nor totally bad. Much like any culture, it is a mixture of positive and negative elements. What is certain, though, is that modern culture is a fact and must be taken into account in the context of proclaiming the "Good News" and in the preparation of evangelisers.

Modernity and Dialogue

Dialogue means many things to many people and, indeed, can be legitimately defined in different ways depending on the contexts in which it is used. As a basic minimum, dialogue, in whatever environment it finds itself, demands openness to others, willingness (and the ability) to listen, a realisation that one does not possess the entire truth and a desire to search

and work with others for the benefit of the human race.

In honesty it must be admitted that dialogue has not always been a strong suit of Christian leaders. Those who differed or opposed were often met with reprobation, hostility or, in milder moments, pity. Competing claims frequently took the form of invective, denunciation, the trading of insults and even physical violence.

However, even before the end of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI gave dialogue a boost through his encyclical Ecclesiam Suam in which he says: "The Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. The Church becomes the word; the Church becomes the message; the Church becomes dialogue." As an outcome of the Second Vatican Council, "dialogue" is becoming an accepted form of evangelisation at least at the theoretical level. It comprises the encounters, large or small, in which one side discusses and debates with the other; it is a quality of relationship built upon contacts and conversations, on tolerance and on understanding, on a willingness to accept a common humanity and to join forces with disparate elements of the global village to bring the Good News to modern men and women.

Dialogue and specific issues

The world of scientific exploration and discovery is moving forward at breakneck speed. To take just one example, the **biotechnical field**, replete with a myriad of ethical overtones, has, within a generation, greatly altered concepts about generation. The once assumed inevitable connection between sex and conception is no longer valid. There are now at least a half-dozen ways in which conception can take place and as many in which it can be prevented: and this is simply one of the facets of genetic engineering. To dialogue effectively with the genetic engineer it is necessary to know not only theology, but to have some sense of the breakthroughs in this branch of science.

The struggle of women for equality has been defined as one of the major challenges facing both society and the Church today. That it concerns Church leaders is clear from the attention given to it by Pope and bishops. Several modern developments have brought about a change in the status of women; the possibility of controlling fertility has been a major factor, but also playing a significant part has been the widespread education (including theological) of women, their entry into the work force and the discrediting of a number of myths about their relationship to men and their role in society. Dialogue with and an attempt to understand the slightly more numerous part of the species is important for the contemporary evangeliser.

The increasing population already alluded to, poses challenges to civil and religious leaders alike. While many demographers hold, probably rightly so based on abstract models, that the world is capable of

sustaining an even more rapid growth in the numbers of people, no one has yet found a way to ensure an equitable distribution of goods; consequently malnutrition (sometimes starvation) continues on a massive scale with all its attendant physical and moral problems

That the Church has entered the field of **environmental preservation** is scarcely surprising given the traditional stress on natural law, which at one time tended to be confined to personal morality but is now seen to encompass relationships between the human being and the natural environment. Clearly the salvation of the physical world and the integrity of creation must be part of any programme of Justice and Peace.

The sanctity of life has had few stronger defenders than the Catholic Church. However, the defence has not always been even-handed, sometimes tending to stress certain aspects of life to the neglect of others. The "seamless garment" approach insists on respect for all human life from conception to the grave and opposes abortion, inhuman conditions, morbid poverty, starvation caused by environmental destruction and economic manipulation, the threat of wholesale annihilation posed by nuclear and chemical weapons, the execution of political prisoners and neglect of the elderly, while promoting integrated human development and peace based on justice. To accomplish this mission, it will be necessary to have at least some idea of the economic and social forces at work in society and some techniques for preparing people to deal with them from the Gospel perspective.

Modernity and non-Western society

Much of what has been said up to now has been based on the impact of contemporary society on the Western World. For missionaries it is important to ask whether the same or similar conditions will apply in other parts of the world which find themselves at different stages of scientific and technological development. While some will attempt to transpose the Western experience, with a few modifications, to developing areas, others recognise that different historical and social elements can in fact generate quite a different situation.

AFRICA. Sub-Saharan Africa has largely embraced Christianity but its conversion is relatively recent. Christianity, while bringing the Gospel, has also been a co-agent with the colonial powers in the introduction of modernity and secularisation through its health, education and business ventures. Despite the rapid growth of membership in mainline churches, packed places of worship, an abundance of vocations to ministries and the proliferation of sects, Africa has not remained immune to those influences that have been instrumental in shaping the West.

In many places one witnesses the erosion of the identity of peoples and the gradual disintegration of village life the individual emerging against group

solidarity. Efforts are afoot to build national consciousness and promote intercultural relationships transcending traditional boundaries.

Africa, too, is a battleground of competing ideologies, some of which are imported. Its businessmen compete with the outside world and its citizens aspire to the "good life" in common with their contemporaries in other parts of the globe. There is rich scope here for the evangeliser who on the one hand is committed to helping his people towards a more just share of the world's goods while at the same time maintaining traditional cultures and avoiding excessive materialism. It is a delicate balance.

LATIN AMERICA. The impact of modernity on the "most Catholic" of continents is complex and even contradictory. It would seem that an upper-class elite, for the most part nominally Catholic, has followed patterns of secularisation similar to those characteristic of the West. On the other hand, at the grassroots level, religious commitment seems if anything to have strengthened in recent years. From the point of view of Catholicism this is the result, in large measure, of the Church's option for the poor and the stance taken by the Church (or portions of it) against injustice and exploitation. As a result a liberating "popular Christianity" has been born and, in resisting the new forms of oppression created by capitalism in the seventies and eighties, the peoples did not deny their religious traditions, rather they reformulated them.

Furthermore, although Latin America is to the fore in the rush towards urbanisation, it has lacked the capacity and the time to absorb these migrants as was done in Europe and the States. The unskilled, low paid, non-unionised workers with little social future need a survival strategy and many have found it in Pentecostal movements, Afro-American cults and expressions of popular Catholicism, which have transformed but not diminished their religious fervour. Thus, contemporary Latin American society has tended less towards secularisation than to a pluriformity of religious expressions.

Modernity and Formation

The challenge of bringing the good news of Christ to a modern secularised culture, and of doing so in a spirit of dialogue rather than polemics, has implications for Formation programmes, which must prepare evangelisers in a realistic way for contact with today's society. As a very minimum, Formation programmes and formators should be thoroughly aware of contemporary society and especially of its expressions in those areas in which their particular candidates are likely to exercise their evangelical efforts.

An effective Formation programme will aim to help candidates not merely to cope with the world as it is but to transform it. It will be particularly sensitive to the needs of the poor, that is, those who are virtually powerless in the contemporary world.

Our SRL emphasises the need for significant periods of pastoral involvement in the course of initial Formation during both cycles and more specially during the period of apostolic experience. Properly organised, these periods can be of immense value, enabling both those in Formation and Formators to work together in dialogue with the contemporary world and in the promotion of justice for the disinherited. Realistically speaking, this aspect of Formation can be taught only by example and experience subsequently Today it is not sufficient to give reflected upon. Formation based on models or on ecclesiastical formulas that have little relevance to today's society. Nor can it be assumed that after a theological and spiritual Formation seminarians will be able to absorb. almost by osmosis, the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the challenge of a contemporary society. To cite a simple example: we cannot presume the ability to dialogue; it is a skill which has to be learned.

Spirituality for today will be one of searching, evolving, discovering, of uncertainty and transition, of parting and of letting go. Old images and concepts crumble as God through His creativity beckons us forward in trusting love, to search for unity in a world in danger of being fractured; unity between Christian and non-Christian, between Christians themselves, between the material and the spiritual and surely between woman and man. "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female - for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Conclusion

The modern world, or at least the western segment of it, is sometimes referred to as "Post-Christian". It is an infelicitous choice of phrase. Certainly the overt influence of Christian churches is less obvious today, but a world that has been privileged to receive the Incarnation and to be redeemed by Christ can hardly be spoken of as "Post" Christian.

It is a world that has altered dramatically in the twentieth century and will, according to the experts, change even more rapidly in the future; many feel dislocated by the bewildering pace of development. Nevertheless, it is the only world we have and we are committed to announce to it the good news, adapting our approach to the culture in which we find ourselves. In this we can identify with Libermann when, facing new social realities, less dramatic perhaps than ours but nevertheless real, he counselled his followers in the well known letter of March 1848 that "... we should not forget that we are no longer living in the system established in the past... we must do good and fight evil in the state and according to the mentality of the age in which the world lives... let us frankly and simply accept the new order and bring to it the spirit of the Gospel" (N.D. 10, 151).

nformation—documentation S. S. P. 195 CLIVO DI CINNAZOO 136 ROME ITALY

I/D 48

THE GENERALATE TEAM

May 1991

Towards "a committed and responsible laity" (SRL 18)

This I/D is offered as an instrument to help our reflections on the role of Spiritans in the formation of, and cooperation with, laity. It is not seen as a definitive treatment of the subject but rather as an encouragement to continue discussion.

"Fostering Christian Communities" (SRL 18)

The Diocese of Port Louis (Mauritius) took a decision in 1981 to radically transform parish ministry. Instead of simply being places where people gathered for liturgy and sacraments, parishes were to become centres for the union and coordination of basic ecclesial communities. These communities were to be living cells in which Christians were encouraged to share fraternal union, to participate in adult catechesis, to pray and read the "signs of the times" and to participate in concrete apostolic work.

It soon became apparent that to accomplish these objectives a programme of Christian formation was essential and thus was born "Le Thabor", a centre which, under the guidance of Fr. Maurice Piat (now Bishop), prepares leaders, and subsequently offers them support and encouragement.

Half a world away, in Trinidad, the flourishing SERVOL movement is the inspiration of Fr. Gerry Pantin, who left a teaching post to give himself totally to the poor and the marginalised. SERVOL is based on the conviction that the most fundamental need of today's world is the countering of the crisis in family life by the preparation of young people for parenthood. Assuming childhood and the late teens to be the crucial periods, SERVOL concentrates on preparing Early Childhood Teachers and Adolescent Instruc-Basic to the training programme is a threemonth human development course which helps potential leaders to understand and accept themselves before going on to acquire the skills necessary to interact with parents and the community. The programme, a balance of theoretical and practical skills, is ecumenical in character embracing adherents of the Christian, Moslem and Hindu faiths.

Directions

Capturing the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, certain trends are evident in today's Church: the development of close-knit communities at village and

district level; the formation of more and more laity to undertake ministry; greater collaboration with lay men and women to transform society according to Gospel principles; and the opportunity for greater initiatives on the part of the laity within the apostolic and missionary work of the Church.

Spiritans have not been slow to respond. In addition to those mentioned above, Fr. John B. Doyle is ministering to some of the half-million people who moved into Rondonia (Brazil) as part of a World Bank project. The 120,000 parishioners in Rolim de Moura are made up of over 100 local communities scattered over a wide area, each with its own animators, who are prepared by the parish team through regular visits and special "Training Days" held several times a year; participation averages about 80 per session. The methodology is a combination of lecture, small group reflection and practical action; the topics usually a mixture of religious and social concerns.

Fr. Albert Le Floc'h is now in his fourth year in the parish of Ruashi, Zaïre, in which more than twenty "Communautés Ecclesiales Vivantes" (CEV) have been established, all animated by lay leaders. In addition, he is assisted by a lay "collaborator" who assumes responsibility for much of the work of instruction and is especially adept in ministry to young married couples.

When Spiritan personnel in Angola were seriously depleted because of the civil war, the call went out from the Generalate for volunteers from other provinces. The result of this appeal was the formation of a team in Malange, composed of Spiritans Bernard Duchêne, Bernard Ducrot, John Kingston and James Flynn. Concerned that the progress of the war would leave the diocese bereft of pastoral workers, the team set about implementing an intense programme of training for catechists. Prospective candidates were given a six-month preparatory course, divided into three segments of two months each over a period of three years, and interspersed with supervised practical Within a short time most of the burden of evangelising, organising and sustaining the Christian communities rested on the shoulders of these catechists and the village councils. The bishop authorised the head catechists to baptise and to officiate at marriages.

Spiritan schools in Ireland, the U.S., Canada, Trinidad, France (Auteuil) and elsewhere are largely in

the hands of lay teachers. Duquesne University has its first lay president and the headmasters of several of our secondary schools are lay. Gradually laity have been prepared and encouraged to assume roles at one time almost exclusively in the hands of Spiritans.

Fr. François Le Bec is the pastor of Notre-Dame de Fatima in Loubomo, the Congo, a parish of some 50,000 Catholics. It is a parish full of life and vitality thanks in large measure to the establishment of numerous basic communities animated by lay leaders.

Thus in many parts of the world, in places as diverse as Brazil, Zaïre, the United States, Senegal, Papua New Guinea, Trinidad and Ireland, lay people are assuming more and more responsibility for the apostolic work of the Congregation as members of basic communities, catechists and parish leaders, teachers, promoters of justice and human rights, and development and relief workers. The specific examples cited are clearly not intended to be exhaustive. They may not even be the best available. They are simply a random selection offered in recognition of, and encouragement to, those involved in this important work.

Awakenings

In the Christian communities of the New Testament a balance was maintained between the ministerial priesthood and the charisms of the faithful. However, the establishment of an entente between the Church and the Empire confirmed by the Edict of Milan (A.D. 313) gave rise to a change in the nature of the Christian community. A new model of Church began to emerge, stressing the sacramental aspect and placing an ever growing emphasis on the role of the clergy while diminishing the active participation of the laity.

By the time of the Reformation, the lay person had come to be regarded as little more than an eternal minor, a situation which persisted more or less up to the twentieth century. In 1906 Pope St. Pius X referred to the laity as "the multitude" and went on to say that "the one duty of the multitude is to allow themsleves to be led, and like a docile flock to follow the pastors".

There were exceptions. The faith was carried to Korea by lay people and sustained by them for decades before clergy arrived. In many mission lands catechists and lay leaders provided the bulk of instruction and animated the prayer life of young Churches, often deprived for long periods of the services of priests and religious.

Nevertheless, it is generally fair to say that, at least in the Western Church, the laity were almost completely passive, having little input into the development of theology or spirituality and little active role in the missionary life of the Church.

But even before Vatican II the winds of change had begun to blow, however mildly. Rapid sociological and demographic developments made new approaches inevitable. Fresh concepts of lay action emerged, amongst them Catholic Action, Young Christian Workers and, in a more modest vein, the Legion of Mary (whose founder was Spiritan educated), giving rise to new relationships of cooperation and equality between clergy and laity.

It was Vatican II, however, which firmly attempted to

restore the lay person to her/his proper role within the Christian community. The biblical image of the People of God was emphasised, helping to renew the theological understanding of the Church. Lumen Gentium has this to say: "There is one chosen people of God, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; there is a common dignity of members deriving from their rebirth in Christ, a common grace as children of God, a common vocation to perfection, one salvation, one hope and undivided charity. In Christ and in the Church there is, then, no inequality arising from race or nationality, social condition or sex, for there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (LG 32).

Thus with Vatican II the image of the church as People of God gains a privileged place in theology. The Council's decision to place consideration of the People of God before a reflection on the hierarchical structuring of the Church was a fundamental choice. It emphasised what Christians have in common before that which differentiates them in terms of functions within the Church. Oneness in Christ Jesus is the profound and rich mark of members of the Church. It is the same reality, Baptism and Faith, which grants admission to the people and which is much earlier than any distinction based on charisms and ministries within the community.

The same concept is contained in the Apostolic Exhortation Christificeles Laici of John Paul II, in which he says: "Through their belonging to Christ, Lord and King of the Universe, the laity share in his Kingly Office and are called by Him to serve God's Kingdom and its spread throughout the world... The laity are called in a special way to give back to the created Universe all its original value" (CL 15).

In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II comes back to the same ideas. "All the laity," he tells us, "are missionaries by baptism," and he recalls that "from the very origins of Christianity the laity - as individuals, families and entire communities - shared in spreading the faith" (RM 71). The Holy Father encourages laity to exercise a missionary role in the vast and complicated world of politics, economics and social life and to participate in the variety of activities, ministries and forms of animation available within the Church (RM 72).

Today's challenge is to help the laity to rethink their role in the Churches and to accompany them in the formation they need to fulfil their vocation. It would seem to follow, as a recent symposium of the East African Pastoral Institute puts it, that "our Churches should be devoting at least as much of their resources to lay formation as to the formation of priests and religious".

Those who "wish to be associated with us" (SRL 24.3)

As the Church carries its salvific message through different eras and to varied sociological contexts, the Spirit calls forth prophetic communities to respond to the "signs of the times". Thus at different periods of history new styles of religious life have appeared: the Cenobitical Life, the Monastic Tradition, the Mendicants and the Apostolic/Missionary Congregations. Each development, while not eliminating its predecessor, responded to a particular trend in society and within the Church. Many would say that today we are entering a new era which will, in turn, call forth new forms of apostolic/community life. Perhaps it is in this context that we can best

understand the growing interest in "Associates".

It will probably come as a surprise to many to learn that the notion of associates has been around for a long time in the Congregation. The Des Places rule for the Holy Ghost Seminary recognises both clerical and lay associates. In the 1770s a lay associate taught in the college in Cayenne. Libermann accepted at least one associate for the missions, Dr. Brunet, who worked in Reunion. For many years agrégés were part of our communities. Most significant, perhaps, was the proposal, in 1885, of Fr. (later Archbishop) Le Roy, that married taymen be admitted as associates.

The post-Vatican II Chapter (1968/69) reintroduced the matter of "Associate Members", placing it in the context of the Vatican Council's invitation to missionary institutes to be "ready to train and help those who engage in missionary activity for a time" (AG 27). The Chapter decided that "major superiors can accept associate members, priests and lay men who wish to consecrate themselves to the work of the Congregation by adopting our way of life" (14B).

The Chapter of 1974 included a brief section on diversity of members (61): "It seems appropriate to give more attention to the question of new forms of members in the Congregation in view of: (a) the call of the laity to participate in missionary work; (b) the desire expressed by some to engage in it on a temporary basis; and (c) the desire of some to share the prayer life of our communities."

The 1980 Chapter recognised that some circumscriptions had begun experiments with new forms of membership (101). The Chapter asked the General Council to have a concrete description of those experiences ready for the meeting of the Enlarged General Council to be held in 1982 (102). It also encouraged "experiments with lay missionaries who may wish to associate themselves with our apostolic endeavours and our missionary spirituality without any intention of establishing juridical links with the Congregation" (103).

In the Spiritan Rule of Life the question of associate membership is left open for new experiments: "In some places those who are working with us wish to be associated with us. We welcome them with joy, inviting them to share our spirituality and our apostolic life. The conditions of their acceptance and their work are decided at the level of each circumscription" (24.3). SRL also suggests Formation for associates (125.1).

The legislation enshrined in various Chapter documents up to and including the Spiritan Rule of Life does little more than leave the door open to those circumscriptions who wish to experiment with the idea of Associates and Lay Missionaries. In practice several provinces and districts have seized the opportunity, and the lived reality is richer than the written word.

GERMANY (1982) Missionar auf Zeit. At the National Katholikentag in Berlin in 1980, some young people asked the missionary institutes to open themselves to associates who would share their life and missionary work for a time. Out of the response to this request was born the project Missionar auf Zeit. The first MaZ went overseas in 1983, some for one year and others for up to three years. To date more than 30 have returned from missionary work, while a dozen others continue their efforts in Latin America and Africa.

the young people who asked for this experience were

clear that they were not development workers. They were looking for a new way of living Church and considered that sharing in the community life and spirituality of a missionary institute overseas, while engaged in apostolic work, was integral to this aim. Also envisaged from the outset by the young people themselves was the long-term aim of missionary insertion into the Church at home.

(1987) Assoziierten. This development began when a number of young people formed a study group directed by a Spiritan in Stuttgart and became linked to the local Spiritan community in order to have some share in Spiritan community life. The initial group was soon joined by some of the returned MaZ.

TRANSCANADA (1971) VICS - Volunteer International Christian Service - is an ecumenical lay volunteer programme providing professional and technical personnel to aid with Third World development in a Christian context. At any one time some 40 VICS personnel are serving overseas, and to date 349 have participated in the project. VICS lay missionaries have worked in 36 countries covering Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania. On their return many continue their missionary commitment in the local Church. Although VICS is directed by the Spiritans, members are not considered Spiritan associates in the strict sense of the term.

(1974) Lay Spiritans. A conversation on Pentecost Sunday 1974, between the Provincial of TransCanada and a lay couple, gave concrete expression to the concept of Lay Spiritans which had been under study for some time. These are people who wish to associate themselves with the Spiritan charism and community and, where possible, to work closely with Spiritans, especially in those apostolates directed towards the marginalised and the oppressed. Lay Spiritans are accepted as members within the Province and participate in community functions including chapters.

CANADA (1979) Spiritains Associés. This group was launched in the Province of Canada in 1979 as a means of allowing lay persons to live the Church's evangelising mission in collaboration with Spiritans. They seek to share community life and prayer under the influence of Libermann's spirituality and have recently produced a constitution for the guidance of members.

SPAIN (1972). The Province has tried various ways of associating lay people with the Spiritan missionary task and way of life. Lay missionaries have gone to Angola, Cameroon, Tanzania, Paraguay and Brazil. The province provides formation, puts the lay missionary in touch with the missionary bishop and arranges contracts. Some 25 people have participated in this programme since its initiation.

USA-EAST/TANZANIA (1982). The Spiritan Associate Programme is a volunteer missionary apostolate undertaken initially by USA-East in conjunction with the District of Kilimanjaro. It offers to Christians the opportunity for temporary commitment to missions, lived in the Spiritan tradition. More than 25 people have participated in this programme and some of the returned missionaries are laying the foundations for continuing the programme in the U.S., where the Eastern Povince has put the former novitiate of Dorseyville at their disposal.

HOLLAND (1990). Following several years of research and a number of short-term projects, the Provincial Council established the associate program known as "Medicatalders".

Its objective is to prepare lay men and women, who wish to devote themselves to the poor in a Spiritan context, with the training and support necessary for a three-year (minimum) commitment. Some members have already been sent overseas.

The foregoing are the established programmes, however fragile; several circumscriptions are preparing to launch initiatives, amongst them USA-West, Ireland, France, Belgium and East Africa.

Trends

Among the groups already well established, a number of trends can be identified. Some cater for short-term commitment to apostolic work, either within the context of Spiritan communities or with others. Following their apostolic experience, some individuals continue to be associated with the Spiritans and may progress to long-term, even lifetime, engagement. Others return to participation in their local Church, often maintaining contact with Spiritans for the purposes of reflection and mutual support. On the other hand some associates are geared, from the beginning, to long-term involvement. Among these latter, two sources of inspiration are evident: those motivated by a desire to work with Spiritans in apostolic/missionary work, and those who are initially attracted to the community life/spirituality of the Congregation. Both groups draw sustenance from the charism and the spirit of our founders.

Other Congregations

Spiritans are by no means alone in their interest in, or their experimentation with, associate programmes. In November 1987 the Conference of General Curias in Rome met to discuss the topic "How can contemporary religious institutes share their charism with the laity through new or renovated structures?" A year previously the Italian Conference of Major Superiors (CISM) devoted its general meeting to the theme "Religious and laity united for the Gospel". In May 1989 more than a hundred directors of associate programmes met at Bon Secours Centre, Maryland, USA, to share histories and to explore the future. Also in May 1989, at a meeting sponsored by SEDOS (Rome), superiors general and councillors of 20 congregations gathered to discuss their experiences, which proved to be as varied as the charisms of the institutes they represented. In June 1991, the first meeting of Spiritan Associates is scheduled for Bethel Park, Pittsburgh, USA.

The Associate Movement, although it preceded *Christifideles Laici* by many years, received a boost from the document, in which John Paul II emphasises: "That the Christian laity is co-responsible with ordained ministers and religious in carrying out the mission of the Church" (CL 15). It is this sense of equality and joint responsibility that has helped laity and religious come together in what is now becoming a significant movement, at least within the Western Church. Stress is placed on forming bonds between laity and religious around a specific charism and mission and in joining together towards deeper spiritual growth. Impelling motives are a desire for a greater community, a wish to deepen prayer life and a longing for a broader service of ministry.

As is often the case, legislation lags behind reality. This new phenomenon is not treated expressly in Canon Law. However, by analogy, one can find some direction in those canons which deal with third orders and members of secular institutes, or which speak of laity sharing a charism of an institute (Canons 303, 312 and 725). Some inkling of the mind of the Church can also be derived from the fact that many institutes (including our own) have had constitutions which make provisions for associate programmes of some kind approved by CRIS. Nevertheless, real legal and canonical difficulties remain, such as the extent to which associates can become full members, share in the government of institutes (including chapters), hold active and passive voice and participate in formation programmes, to mention just a few.

Other emerging issues are: the need to develop a formation based on the reality of lay life, something more than a pale imitation of sacerdotal or religious spirituality; the need to develop the associate programmes as entities in their own right and not simply as a means to cope with the vocation "crisis" or the shortage of clergy. Financial arrangements, too, can be tricky and will demand careful consideration.

Conclusion

The proliferation of lay groups seeking to express their Christian calling through a serious apostolic commitment is surely a sign of the times. Many young men and women are motivated, as strongly as were their predecessors, to serve Christ, but do not feel called to traditional religious life; rather they prefer other forms of commitment to the Gospel. In Rome, for example, a lay community started in 1968 has grown today to encompass 4,000 members. Rooted in the Gospel and the teachings of Vatican II, members of the Sant'Egidio Community direct their apostolic efforts, in particular, towards the promotion of justice and the service of the poorest.

Profound and rapid cultural changes taking place today call for us to rethink and restructure the Church's pastoral operation. In order to process this restructuring with theological seriousness, we must pause and look at the Church's tradition. "Return to the sources" was one of the keynotes of Vatican II. It is by reminding ourselves of how many different possibilities of pastoral structuring and action the early Churches adopted, each in its own area, and how many legitimate changes or orientations were adopted over the centuries in answer to new situations, that we can have sufficient openness to the actions of the Spirit to face up courageously to the challenges offered us at the present moment.

Our Spiritan Rule of Life has taken up the invitation of Vatican II and has called us to a closer collaboration with laity in ministry, as well as sharing with them our spirituality and our apostolic life (SRL 24.3, 135.1). Considerable latitude is left concerning the manner in which this invitation will be put into practice. It is recognised that different circumscriptions will search out the means best suited to the realities of their society and of the local church, taking into account the aspirations of the laity themselves. A significant role for Spiritans is the utilisation of their resources, human and material, in preparation and support of lay ministries.

formation - documentation

SP/195 CLIVO DICINNA/DO136 ROME ITALY

I/D 49

THE GENERALATE TEAM

January 1992

Spiritans and Education

This ID was originally planned to include both Education and the wider Youth apostolate but it was found impossible to compress such a vast field into the relatively confined space of an ID. In view of the extensive material available from the Symposium which took place at Duquesne University in June 1991 it was decided to concentrate on education in this publication.

The first ever worldwide symposium of Spiritan Educators, held at Duquesne University from June 24th to 28th 1991, attracted a registration of 98 delegates from 24 Spiritan circumscriptions in 20 The response far exceeded the countries. expectations of the organisers and indicated a widespread interest in education in its multiple forms throughout the Congregation. In fact it was these "multiple forms" that proved to be the highlight of the symposium. From Brazil the conference was reminded that "for each age the Church elaborates a different theoretical approach for the evangelisation of youth. Approaches that worked in the past frequently fail to respond to a modern need." Spiritan educators from TransCanada echoed the sentiment: "If anyone wishes to be in touch with people who have scarcely heard the Gospel message let him choose a Toronto school.... Here is a "tribe" to whom the marvelous works of God must be proclaimed in their own language". Similar comments were heard from Auteuil which has adjusted its program to current realities, from the relatively new initiatives of Servol in the Caribbean to improve the quality of family life, and from Spiritan educators in universities, secondary schools and other forms of education throughout the world.

Historical Perspective

Spiritans have been involved in education for a long time. The rather loose association founded by Claude Poullart des Places concerned itself at first with the rescue of young chimney sweeps and then with the education of poor clerics. After the death of the founder his work progressed along similar lines. Later preparation of seminarians for priesthood was widened to include foreign missionary service.

At first Libermann insisted that all should serve in "foreign and distant missions"; he did not see any members of the society remaining in Europe solely for the purpose of saving souls. "It is only for the benefit of our missions", he reminded his confreres "that a few may live there" (N.D. 2, 240). However he later modified this view and in 1841 wrote to Levavasseur explaining that the formation of German clergy could be undertaken without betraying the purposes of the Congregation. He stated in a memorandum to Propaganda Fide in 1846 that it was the duty of the missionary to work at the "intellectual and physical aspects of civilization i.e. in education, agriculture and technical knowledge" (N.D. 8, 248). When some of the missionaries objected he insisted that "to abandon the schools is to destroy the future of the missions" (N.D. 9, 44).

Libermann's policy continued to evolve after his death. In 1853 the Congregation took charge of the French Seminary in Rome and then during the 30 years of Schwindenhammer's administration a total of 31 seminaries and colleges (not to mention trade and agricultural schools) were added. Among those dating from this period are Beauvais and Mesnières in France, Rockwell and Blackrock in Ireland, Holy Spirit in Portugal, Duquesne in the US, St. Martials in Haiti and St. Mary's in Trinidad.

During the Generalate of Archbishop Le Roy the educational apostolate was more muted and in fact Spiritans withdrew from a number of schools. However in the first half of the present century education became especially important as an instrument of evangelisation in many countries of continental Africa. Colleges reopened in Reunion and Mauritius and new ones were established in Trinidad, Brazil, USA, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Kenya, Germany, Angola and Canada. In 1958 of the 74 educational establishments operated

by Spiritans and open to all qualified applicants 9 were in the Americas, 5 in the Carribean, 7 in Europe, 4 in the Indian Ocean and 49 in Africa (17 in Nigeria alone). There were also 47 seminaries at different levels.

In 1986 the Spiritan Rule of Life (18,1), when dealing with "service of local churches", incorporated education as one of our valid apostolates. SRL speaks three times of education: in connection with the preparation of laity, as an apostolate in its own right, and as a response to the needs of youth. With regard to the latter the statistics are mind boggling. In the Nigerian population of 119 million 71.9% are younger than 29 (43% are 14 or under); in Brazil 67.7% of 150 million are under 29; in Kenya 76.2% of 25 million (51.4% under 14); in Madagascar 70.1% of 11 million, (Encyclopedia Britannica Year Book, 1990). One does not have to be an expert on statistics to realise that mission to youth will demand considerable attention and energy for the foreseeable future.

Varieties of Spiritan Education

Frequently one hears "Spiritan Education" referred to in a manner that suggests that it is a monolithic or homogeneous entity. If the conference at Duquesne accomplished nothing else it dispelled this inaccurate image. While all our educational enterprises share a commitment to gospel values, integral human development, excellence in learning, sound moral principles, and, from a Spiritan point of view, a certain world vision and missionary outlook, nevertheless the approach to this ministry varies greatly. The following is an arbitrary (and probably inadequate) descriptive classification:

- 1. Non Formal Education. This comprises special ministry to youth as in SERVOL (Trinidad), Capacitaçao da Juventude (a national program of youth ministry developed by our confreres in Brazil), and Casa dos Rapazes (Angola) together with adult education in the fields of Development (Kimmage Institute) and catechetics (C.I.M., Paris). A number of confreres also conduct Justice and Peace training programmes in several countries.
- 2. Education at the Tertiary level. While Duquesne University, the only Spiritan institution at this level, takes pride of place many confreres also minister in a variety of capacities at other universities, institutes of technology, teachers' colleges both Catholic and secular: for instance (the list is partial) Catholic University of Puerto-Rico (President); Catholic Institute, Paris, University of Sierra Leone, Institute of Higher Studies, Mexico, Salve Regina College, U.S.A. (Professors); College of Surgeons, Dublin, and York

University, Toronto (Chaplains).

Duquesne already has several initiatives underway - a moral education program, outreach to overseas students, intercultural experience for teachers in training, links with Spiritan institutes in Africa and a campus ministry geared to promoting sensitivity towards the poor. It can go much further and become noted for its peace studies, its justice curriculum, its research on international development and for its practical interest in the vision and objectives of the Spiritan family to which it owes its existence.

Also falling within this category, but beyond the scope of this paper, are the many confreres teaching in formation programmes both within and outside the Spiritan context.

- 3. The Secondary School level is the most extensive institutional education ministry of Spiritans encompassing schools in Europe, North America, the Caribbean and Africa. These institutions can be further sub-divided:
- A. Schools in "mission" countries where education has been an important instrument of evangelisation and the establishment of local churches. These schools cater for first or second generation Catholics but also offer educational opportunities to a significant number of non-Christian students. Their ecumenical record is impressive. As the report from Sierra Leone to the symposium put it: "Reflecting on the educational work carried out by missionaries over the past 70 years Spiritans are appreciating more and more its value and the contribution it has made to the building up of the local church. If this local church is to be further developed both ad extra and ad intra it is becoming increasingly evident that missionaries and local priests, brothers and sisters must have a presence in secondary Recently bishops in Nigeria and schools". Ghana, alarmed at declining standards, have pressed Spiritans to become more involved in education. Given the acute economic, political and social problems facing many third world countries a positive response to such appeals would seem to be in accord with our commitment to "the most disadvantaged".
- B. Secondary Schools which, whatever their origins, today cater for the most part to middle and upper middle class students. These are found principally, but not exclusively, in first world countries. In the past they have been a plentiful source of missionary vocations and have contributed significantly to the preparation of leaders in Church and State. These schools face a stiff challenge as they develop coordinated pastoral programmes and foster "a

faith that does justice". As the Irish delegation to the symposium stated "... part of the programme should be a critical analysis of society and of the consumerist/secularist values it portrays; students and staff should be involved at a practical level in the promotion of a just society.... Missionary awareness too will be continued in line with the healthy traditions of our colleges." Interesting initiatives have been undertaken (again the list is partial) at Blackrock (Dublin, Ireland), Holy Ghost College (Broich, Germany), and St. Joseph's (Trinidad).

C. Non Fee Paying Schools which are open to all students and frequently provide special services for new immigrants, refugees, slow learners and the handicapped. Examples are the Spiritan schools in Canada, and the many centres initiated by Spiritans to take care of drop outs and marginalised youth such as the Foyer Energie (Tananarive), St. Joseph's (Philadelphia), and Kituo Chavijana Mt. Fillipi Neri (Tanzania).

Changing Times

There seems little need to describe again the changing world in which we live. In the last few decades we have split the atom, pierced the veil of space, cracked the genetic code and learned to communicate through a host of new instruments. We have seen the collapse of communism, the rise of powerful business and monied classes and a growing disparity between northern and southern hemispheres.

In the Church, too, significant developments are underway. In this (1991), the centenary year of "Rerum Novarum", awareness is growing of the increasing emphasis on the social ministry of the Church, illustrated in a number of Papal and Episcopal documents. Our present Holy Father was quite emphatic in "Centesimus Annus" that "as far as the Church is concerned the social message of the gospel must not be considered a theory but above all else a basis and a motivation for action" (CA 57) and again "... it (justice) requires above all a change of lifestyle, of models of production and consumption and of the established structures of power which today govern societies" (CA 58).

Challenge

Our mission requires of us commitment to the poor and we take as constitutive of evangelisation the "integral liberation of people, action for Justice and Peace and participation in development" (SRL 14). This is the context in which, and against which, the quality of all our apostolates, including education, must be judged.

And who are the poor? Sometimes religious have difficulty with this question, a difficulty rarely experienced by government institutions, social agencies or the poor themselves. The poor? They are the economically disadvantaged materially deprived, the powerless, the exploited, the oppressed; the poor are those who are hungry, without decent shelter or clothes, who lack educational and health care opportunities, are unemployed and feel excluded from the decisions that affect them.

The challenge posed by the option for the poor in the fields of education and youth ministry is not peculiar to the Spiritans. Fr. Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Jesuits, had this to say to 900 of his confreres gathered at Georgetown University in 1989: "the promotion of justice is the forma omnium that must be integrated as a priority into every one of our apostolates. This change of priority in our Society in no way calls into question the value of education as such". Accepting commitment to justice in the name of the gospel as a challenge to the Society to evaluate its educational programmes, he continues: "the option (for the Poor) is far more comprehensive and demanding for it calls upon us to educate all - rich, middle class and poor - from a perspective of justice". He sees a real danger that some schools will not continue in the "Ignatian Tradition" if they lack a clear statement of this mission and a willingness to commit themselves to it.

Works which cater for middle and upper class students face a particularly difficult task. They will find their efforts to approach education from the perspective of the poor or in the interests of justice often misunderstood by fellow Spiritans, staff members, and above all, by parents. When a school does a good job as a result of which parents are able to move up the economic ladder they want their old teachers to be available in turn for their children and so the school community is caught in the upward spiral. Parents who are happy with a school wish everything to remain as it was and often have difficulty accepting developments in Catholic social doctrine that may challenge some of the assumptions of the society to which they belong. To be counter cultural in these circumstances demands courage, tenacity, and patience.

Involvement of Laity

It is quite clear that the diminishing number of Spiritans in many parts of the world make it essential that youth work and educational institutions be staffed largely by Lay people. Quite apart from necessity this should be seen as a normal development. It will also mean that Spiritans commit a significant part of their energy to the selection, formation and accompaniment of those involved in programmes for youth and in teaching. Clearly the co-operators should be aware of our

goals, participate actively in the formulation of vision statements and be given the opportunity to reflect with us on the nature and direction of the Spiritan mission. Thus will develop a true partnership striving to be one in faith, heart and vision. Recently Duquesne installed its first lay President and there are lay Principals guiding St. Mary's and Templeogue (Ireland), Fatima College (Trinidad), and Neil McNeil (Canada).

An important aspect of the involvement of laity is the need to establish structures to ensure the continuance of a Spiritan ethos in our schools when the Spiritan presence has declined numerically or has disappeared altogether. The evolution of Auteuil (France) is an excellent example. The direction of its 25 houses is entirely in the hands of a Lay Director General and Staff while a Spiritan Assistant Director General, two Spiritans on the administrative Council and some Spiritans engaged full-time in pastoral work ensure the Spiritan continuity.

St. Alexandre (Quebec) after several years of discernment has handed over the entire work and property to a Corporation. The agreement has built-in conditions to ensure Spiritan presence and influence.

Spiritan schools in Canada have worked for years under elected School Boards, Templeogue (Dublin) has an established Board of Trustees, and Holy Spirit (Mauritius) has been in lay hands for 15 years without any apparent diminution of its academic and spiritual life.

Other institutions are still struggling with the issue, conscious of a certain urgency. The Enlarged Provincial Council of Ireland, for example, has established as a deadline the Provincial Chapter of 1994.

The Way ahead

The delegates at the Spiritan Education Symposium committed themselves to "our Spiritan Educational Apostolate, both formal and nonformal, inspired by our Spiritan Rule of Life facing the many challenges that place us at a crucial turning point in our history".

They added "In this information age we work to bring education and access to knowledge to all, but especially to the poorest".

"We will promote in more effective ways an awareness of and respect for the diverse ethnic cultural and racial groups which make up the societies in which we work".

Our Foundations and new provinces are facing populations teeming with youth in need of guidance and the acquisition of those skills that will enable them to take their place in a just and equitable society. Without some measure of education or training their chances of achieving this are slim indeed. Furthermore the young Churches need leadership to enable them to accomplish the integration of the gospel message with local cultures.

In the Western world, too, the call has gone out for re-evangelisation. It is difficult to see how this can be promoted without serious contact with the "tribe" of youth. Where can such a meeting be achieved? To a limited degree only in the churches for youth are not attending in big numbers; scarcely to any great extent through the media which are often hostile. Is there perhaps a hope to make some impact through specialised youth programmes, through schools, and through universities?

And then there is that vast, largely untouched multitude of the handicapped, refugees, drop outs, and the marginalised. Who will bring them the Good News; who will give them the tools to cope with an increasingly complex society? Here is a challenge worthy of our missionary vocation.

Conclusion

Involvement of Spiritans in education goes back to the very beginnings of our religious family. The ministry developed in different ways responding to the signs of the times in various countries and in diverse circumstances. It has enjoyed success and known failure. It has been loudly praised and seriously questioned. But always Spiritans participating in this apostolate have striven, within the limits of their capacities, to meet the challenges of the day.

Now as we stand on the brink of the third millennium the Congregation is once again gearing itself to respond to the exigencies of the moment. Facing the often bewildering complexities of to-day's societies, Spiritan educators concluded their Conference at Duquesne by expressing confidence "that, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the charisms bequeathed to us by Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann will enable us, religious and laity, to adapt our educational mission to the challenges of a changing world which seeks global peace and communication across cultural diversity, where poor and marginalised seek a share in global prosperity and a say in decisions which affect their future, and where education becomes a continuing and life-long project".

I/D 50

THE GENERALATE TEAM

June 1992

Dialogue with Traditional Religion

This is the third series on dialogue. Earlier I/D's on the subject had been Dialogue with Non-Christians Religions especially Islam and Dialogue with Modernity. This I/D will carry forward some of the reflections of the Chevilly Meeting on First Evangelization in so far as they touch upon dialogue with traditional religion.

1. The Situation of Traditional Religion.

Among the Bassa (Middle Belt of Nigeria) no one does anything alone. If a member is sick, others will plant his seeds, harvest and sell for him, and bring him the proceeds.

The Hamar of Southern Ethiopia have no verb, "to possess", or " to own ". To see is to have. Whatever is available is for all.

It so happens that some peoples who are almost 100% traditional religionists enshrine certain Gospel values in a high degree, but may have other beliefs and practices contrary to the Gospel, for example, twins may be exposed to death because they are thought to be against the order of nature. In one place, dialogue with Christianity led the people not only to accept twins but to see them as a blessing.

Whatever good is found sown in the minds and hearts of men or in the rites and customs of peoples, these not only are preserved from destruction, but are purified, raised up and perfected... (LG.,17; AG, 9).

2. What is Traditional Religion?

Whereas other religions have known founders and dates of foundation, traditional religion enshaines the cumulative religious search and

endeavours of generations of "ancestors". It represents mankind's basic search for God and its straining towards the Infinite, although in the concrete it is diversified according to localities and situations. The gods in one place may be gods of lightning, in another of fertility, but in each place they relate to local needs and are prompted by the phenomena and the history of the people. Traditional religion precedes Christianity and the founder-religions, and these latter take local colour by borrowing from, and transforming elements in, the traditional religious expression. As it regards Europe, for example, Christmas re-interprets the traditional seasonal winter celebration of the day of the Sun.

3. Survival of Traditional Religion.

Traditional religion is indeed in crisis in many places because it is not seen as adequately catering to modern needs and answering questions of the moment. However, in many other places it is not only still intact but is reorganizing itself. In Africa, traditional religionists still outnumber Catholics; some peoples, like the Sacalav of Madagascar, have to date proved almost impervious to modern and Christian influence. There may be borrowing as with the other religions, but it is only in few cases that this degenerates into syncretism, usually where the adherents are no longer in their natural and social environment.

The expression of faith is in continual

dialogue with underlying traditional religiosity especially in the younger Churches. It affords the framework within which the content of faith is interpreted and related to everyday living.

We strive in every way we can for a fruitful coming together of local cultural and religious traditions with the Gospel of Christ. (SRL, 16.1)

It has been found that, as underlying both the actual Christian beliefs and practices and those of the other religions of an area, for example, Islam, traditional religiosity is often a facilitator of dialogue between the two.

4. Attitudes to Traditional Religion.

Augustine of England was perplexed as to what to do with the pagan temples upon the conversion of the people, and what to make of their sacrifices. Gregory the Great answered:

Destroy the idols but asperse the temples with holy water, let them make booths around the temple, kill and eat. For it is certainly impossible to eradicate all errors from obstinate minds at one stroke. In the Old Testament, God allowed sacrifices to Himself which were formerly to devils.

Until recently the Leonine Prayer for the Conversion of Africa painted a picture of traditional religionists daily falling into hell. It was common to see in traditional religion nothing but deviations and the work of the devil. Study and increased modern contacts are leading to changing attitudes. Traditional religion is now numbered among the great world religions. This positive re-evaluation has made it possible to talk of respect and dialogue.

5. Perplexities.

The new attitude has brought in its train a series of questions and perplexities. Is traditional religion merely a "preparation for the Word"? Is it a locus of divine revelation to "ancestors" comparable to revelation to the patriarchs of the Old Testament? Or is it a means of salvation in its own right, such that traditional religion would stand in a parallel

line with Christianity, and dialogue would mean simply helping it to transform itself? Then there are perplexities of a pastoral kind. For example, how far can the Church go in dialogue with traditional beliefs and practices of marriage? What is the attitude to adopt towards witchcraft and the witchdoctor? Should mission emphasize continuity or rupture? Is dialogue appropriate to one of the other great world religions, for example, Hinduism, but mission to traditional religion?

6. Mission and Dialogue

Many seem to be within who are in reality without, and others seem to be without who are in reality within (Saint Augustine).

Dialogue can be viewed in two ways - as an attitude and spirit which must underlie every Christian form of mission, and as a specific activity expressed in many ways.

The spirit of respect and dialogue is fundamental to mission. It leaves room for the other's identity, his models, his values. We reject every attempt to induce or force conversion in any way, through gifts or other material advantage, through the force of a dominant culture...Mission is best carried out as a mutual search for truth and for an answer to life's mysteries, in full respect of each other's dignity and religious experience.

Partners enter such dialogue in strict fidelity to their own tradition, but with a common commitment to a future horizon of truth. The Christian even in dialogue presents "an account of the hope that is in you, but given in gentleness and reverence" (1 Pt. 3:15); he cannot but present Christ as the norm for God's self-manifestation. For the interlocutor, accepting the demands of Truth may sometimes mean conversion, first as a heightened religious life within his own tradition, and then perhaps, with the grace of God, to acceptance of Christ and visible membership of the Church.

Dialogue as a specific activity may be expressed in four ways - dialogue of life, dialogue of deeds, dialogue of specialists and dialogue of religious experience. The goal is not necessarily conversion, even if it cannot be excluded from the dynamic of the mutual

encounter. A confrere became initiated as an elder among traditional religionists, and was in this way able to participate in decisions which affected people and culture. It is sometimes possible in similar ways to help the progress of a religion or to bring light to bear on decisions and options in a manner that direct preaching may yet be unable to do because of the paucity of believers. Another missionary underwent the full training and initiation as an nganga (medicine-man cum witchdoctor). The intention is not to recommend this, but simply to note how far the desire for dialogue can go.

We make an effort to study the language and understand the people's ways and customs. We respect and accept their human experience in all its depth. SRL, 16,2.

7. Some Themes of Traditional Religion

We can here only barely sketch the fairly common and widespread traits.

Traditional religion interprets religious experience within the context and environment of each society. Its gods are usually defined by local needs and questionings. It is usually not missionary. God is acknowledged as Creator or as an impersonal Force or Numinous, but generally the greater religious attention is given to spirits, ancestors and other mediators with the divine. The sense of the sacred is very strong; there are sacred places, sacred times, sacred persons, and these are considered as foci in some way of the divine. "priesthood" particularly, or in some cases kingship as mediating between the divine and the human, is considered central for welfare and for equilibrium in creation. Religion generally covers the totality of life and often merges with culture. Hence social and moral living receive religious sanction, and religion itself often caters for peace, reconciliation and community building. This sometimes leads to the type of sense of solidarity and sharing evidenced at the beginning of this I/D. Symbolism and ritual bridge the spheres of the sacred and profane, and afford a unified view of reality. Health is generally seen as holistic and covers all the dimensions of man in his various relationships - with himself, with others and with the unseen world.

8. An adapted Starting-point

The starting point should respond to a pressing need or a burning issue in the culture, religion or mind-set of the people. Chevilly meeting mentioned above discussed this under the rubric of what is Good News for whom? For the Borana (South-Ethiopia), the Good News is the experience of forgiveness, forgiveness from God, forgiveness of each other and of the enemy tribes. For the Alago (Nigeria), the Good News is about hope. They say, "rescue the chicken from the kite before you condemn it for straying". Hope is freedom from witchcraft. For the Hamar, the Good News is total harmony - harmony with creation and the environment, harmony within oneself, harmony in all relationships. The East Pokot (Kenya) have a tradition that "in the beginning man cursed himself". A woman threw dung into the waters and said:

when the moon dies, let it return, when man dies, let him go away forever.

Man has never since found an answer to death which became the ultimate power never to be mentioned except in euphemisms. The starting point would be to re-awaken the desire for renewed life which finds its fulfillment in Christ.

9. Dialogue and Lifestyle.

Dialogue sometimes challenges the Christian interlocutor to adopt certain attitudes or incorporate certain values. The missionary must not be found lacking in qualities and values which mark a culture or tradition, or which are included in its profile of a "man of God", otherwise his dialogue with the traditional religion may be aborted from the start.

The Christian interlocutor must also be open to conversion in the sense that he is sometimes challenged by certain values among the people which may express aspects of the Gospel in a concrete and novel manner.

A confrere recounts. When a poor woman brought her sick child to the mission, I gave her money for medical care at the clinic. She threw away the money saying, I have not come for medicines but for your blessing to chase away the evil spirit from my child.

In the traditional worldview, sickness is rarely only physical; it is also a condition of the spirit. An interlocutor must deal with the situation in a holistic manner, attending to both body and spirit and to problems in relationships.

10. Some Theological Reflection.

We shall merely indicate the theological context which has made possible the new attitudes sketched so far. The following are nothing but currents and threads for an ultimate synthesis still in the future.

(a) The Holy Spirit at Work

The Holy Spirit sows the "seeds of the Word", and leads human cultures and religions from the inside. He is at the very source of man's questionings, a questioning which is occasioned not by contingent situations but by the very structure of man's being (Dominum et Vivificantem, 54). Thus every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit who is so mysteriously present in every human heart (Redemptoris Missio, 29).

(b) Possibility of salvation for all.

Until barely thirty years ago, good "pagans" and children who died without baptism were supposed to go to limbo. Then came Vatican II which re-stated that "God wills all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tm. 2:5). This altered the motivation for mission and caught some missionaries off guard. Since Christ died for all men and women, grace is active, not only in Christians but also in the hearts of all men and women of good will, bringing to them the same interior renewal as to Christians. We believe, therefore, that in a way known only to God the Holy Spirit offers all men and women the possibility of sharing in the paschal mystery of Christ (Gaudium et Spes, 22). Concretely, it will be in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions and by following the dictates of their conscience that members of religions share in the one salvation in Christ. (Dialogue and Proclamation, 29).

(c) Revelation and Traditional Religion.

Recent theology understands revelation, not so much as a series of propositions but as God's self-communication through the experience and history of peoples. This self-manifestation and self-communication of God happens in the fundamental postulates of the lives of human beings and societies, in the questionings posed by man's success and failure, love and hope, joy and fear, yearnings and frustrations...In this Tertullian connection, talks of anima naturaliter christiana, that is, of the human soul as christian in its deeper desires. As social institutions which englobe man, the religions mediate both the attraction of the divine upon the human heart and the cumulative response of earlier generations as a context for the religious search of the individual.

11. Leave Mission out? Why Mission?

If the followers of traditional religion can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the Church, why mission? Why try to call men and women into the Church, what is the role of the Christian community?

There is progress from the "seeds of the Word" already present in traditional religion to the full mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ (Dialogue and Proclamation, 70). It is the same Spirit who is at work in cultures and religions that was at work in the death and resurrection of Christ; since he "will take of what is mine and declare it to you" (Jn. 16:14), his action draws men and women, cultures and religions, forward to Christ. Hence true dialogue implies the desire to make Christ recognized, better known and loved, and so it remains oriented towards proclamation. On the other hand, proclamation implies in its essence dialogue based on God's own manner of relating to men.

The Christian community is meant to be "the light of the world, the salt of the earth" (Mt. 5:13). Christ is the truth of man, and the Christian community by imaging Christ is meant to show that truth of man in the concrete; without its witness the very insights of the religions may wither, even though it too profits from certain values in the religions of humankind which mirror for it in a concrete manner some of the values of the very Gospel which it preaches.



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GENERAL COUNCIL

NOVEMBER 1995

SPIRITANS AND COMMUNICATION.

"I make an appeal to all Catholic Organisations, to Religious Congregations and Movements and particularly to both national and international Episcopal Conferences to work to develop the presence of the Church in the Media." The Pope's Message for the World Day of Communication 1992.

ARE SPIRITANS COMMUNICATORS?

They should be! By our missionary vocation each member of the Congregation, dedicated to the Holy Spirit, the communicator per excellence, is called to communicate. Our first obligation is to proclaim the "Good News". The "Good News" can be communicated in many different ways.

1. The means used.

The most common means of communication is the homily and sermon. Well prepared and adapted to the local culture, the sermon can have an important impact.

Many Christian communities use drama and acting. These help to integrate the message of the Bible into the daily lives of the people. Dramatisation of the Bible passages on Christmas night is widespread. In Bangassou in the Central African Republic, every Friday during Lent, slide shows were presented in the Cathedral depicting different biblical events. These shows were well patronised. No doubt the same is happening elsewhere.

In Cameroon, African artists have painted a series of posters which are used in catechist courses. Fr. Paul

Cuypers in his Bible course for Pygmies uses statuettes representing the scenes to be treated. The Pygmies themselves have sculptured these statuettes.

Spiritans are working in the training of catechists in many countries. As a help in the preparation of their catechesis, the catechists receive a bulletin explaining the relevant topics.

In many parishes, the faithful get a parish newsletter. This gives information not only about the parish activities but also a short explanation of the liturgy.

The confrere responsible for the library in the Generalate remarked that he was pleasantly surprised to find such a big number of books written

by Spiritans on a wide variety different of subjects.



The majority of Spiritans still remember the film "Le Missionnaire". The aim of this film was to inform the public about mis-sionary work. Other films have

dealt with other missionary themes. Good films on the Bible are used regularly in courses on Scripture.

2. Modern techniques

Methods of communication are developing. A number of Spiritans are open to the use of more modern technical means of communication. The Itaïci Chapter was very conscious of this. (Document Itaïci 33,2.2) It encouraged the General Council to stimulate the use of modern methods of information and communication apt to evoke

response and dialogue. In order to respond to Itaïci and to know what exactly is being done, confreres actively involved

"Modern" is often equated with "good, upto-date, effective" whereas "traditional" is linked with "dull, old-fashioned and ineffective".

in Social Communications, were invited through "Spiritan News" to make themselves known. About fifty answered. The answers showed an enormous



variety of activities. What follows is information on what some of these confreres are doing.

Brazil. John Kilcrann is linked with an international

network which gives him access to around ninety countries and many thousands of subscribers. In his letter to us he says that the system is being used by many religious and Justice and Peace groups. He is convinced that the Congregation would benefit a lot by adapting the system for our internal communication.

Senegal: J. Vast, J. Lambrecht and A. Duteil work in the "Centre Daniel Brottier". In the centre one finds film documentation, a video library, the secretariat for the magazines: "l'Echo de St. Louis" et "Unir Cinéma", a small printing press and all the equipment that is required for making videos. The complex is sufficiently equipped to establish a centre for training in audio-visual and media communication. Fr Vast has received the medal of the Legion of Honour for his work. The centre has also won international prizes.

Gambia: D. Murray. "The Gambia is a country without TV. However, there are very few people who do not have access to a radio. We have managed to install our own studio. We produce and "package" our own programmes for broadcast by the

radio stations. Living in a predominantly Muslim country we are lucky to have free "air-time" on the national radio station. We have also free "air-time" on a private radio station. However the studio is mainly used for the production of audio-cassettes with a catechetical programme in six of the local languages. Most people are non-literate. Therefore the accuracy of verbal catechetical instruction is of the highest importance. Audio tapes are a help. So we

equip our catechists with audio tapes which they will play during catechetical sessions. A series of posters depicting the subject treated on the tapes are sent with the tapes."

Kenya. Joseph Kelly. "I have never taken a course in Communications but I have been involved in them ever since I put out a class newspaper in lower primary school. Some of my involvement since then has included: newspaper work, a diocesan bulletin, giving workshops, establishing a network of correspondents for national and international radio stations, giving a course during the last semester on Social Communications in the Spiritan Missionary Seminary in Arusha."

Nigeria. B. Theriault. "The newspaper 'The Light' was founded by a Spiritan in 1962 and appeared regularly until some time during the Nigerian War. Its resumption in 1991 was the result of repeated requests by the lay people and clergy of the diocese."

Ireland. S. Galvin. "About twenty local radio stations have been opened in Ireland in the past few years and the Church has become involved in this area of communication. I have become a member of the Religious Broadcasters' Association and it gives me the opportunity of promoting the missionary



aspect of the Church by co-operating with others. I also make myself available for interviews on missionary topics and introduce personalities from abroad."

Many confreres are also aware that modern techniques are not a panacea, giving automatic solutions to all the problems. Frank Naughton from Pakistan writes: "Modern means of communication! 'Modern' is often equated with 'good,' 'up-to-date', 'effective'; whereas

'traditional' is linked with 'dull', 'old fashioned' and 'ineffective'. 'Appropriate' is a more inclusive word and focuses less on the technology and more on the content, the sender, the receiver and the context. The best programs are those which are 1. experiential, 2. participative, 3. learning rather than teaching

events, 4. based on the principle of keeping it simple, 5. based on available resources, 6. group-oriented, 7. interesting 8. engaging. Rather than being communicators, we might be better off being people who facilitate the communications of others."

at night. The television room is a place to meet. In many of our communities throughout the world, there is a periodfor sharing before and after the

MASS MEDIA, A DANGER OR AN ANSWER?

It is the mass media which has seen the fastest development in recent years. By the term "mass media" is understood "an entity of methods and techniques permitting the diffusion to a vast and heterogeneous audience either in writing or audio-visual." (Larousse). When the term mass media is used today it refers in most cases to radio and television.

1. Media, a change in life?

It is worth noting that the mass media influence our

way of looking at the events and the interpretation we give them. Our concept of time, of history, of personal responsibility, of what is new and even our concept of the "Good —

Our concept of time, history, personal responsibility, of what is new and even our concept of the "Good News" and of the Church runs the risk of changing.

In those countries where the newspapers arrive daily, a strike is felt

immediately.

_ news.

News" and of the Church, runs the risk of changing. The messages reach us directly without intermediary. Often they are very attractive, singing their song in unison and absorbing our whole attention.

It is evident that in a world marked by the means of communication, even the style of religious life changes. What is more, the language we religious use, as well as the relations between ourselves and reality, change. We must retain our former roots and at the same time it is impossible to avoid the new means of communication which create a new culture. We live our religious and apostolic life in this new world. We must announce the 'Good News' to this very worldand awaken it to the presence of God in its midst.

International radio and TV give instant and immediate news of what is happening in the world, in our home countries as well in the countries where we are working. The news we hear is discussed at breakfast. A radio is now considered a

personal belonging. In more and more countries, confreres come to the television room before retiring

Such is our habit of getting the latest news daily.

The telephone and the fax have shortened distances but they tend to force us also to take quick decisions without sufficient reflection. Electronic Mail gives us contact with museums, libraries and universities. It makes it possible to discuss common interests with interested parties anywhere in the world.

2. Discernment and media awareness.

Itaïci spoke a lot about communication and encouraged the General Council to "look out for new forms of communication and information, more apt to draw responses and exchanges". Words like "listen", "respect", "dialogue" etc. appear regularly in its deliberations. On the other hand, although Itaici itself used the media to communicate its deliberations, yet the influence of the media does not appear in its analysis of the world in which we live

The Church has drawn attention many times to this new reality in our daily life. Also we, as Spiritans, can ask ourselves if we have become sufficiently conscious of the media and the implication of its presence for our spirituality, our community life and our mission.

Of course there are dangers. Television shows events while, at the same time, leading us to —

In many of our communities there is a period before and after the news.

forget what it does not show. The repetition of a message well presented tends to be accepted uncritically on our part.

It may be true that for many of us, all these means of communication make it difficult to understand the world around us. Every day there is something new coming on the market. The computer adds futuristic components, unimaginable a short time earlier, to what we already know. The world of the multimedia will be a reality in the lives of all of us in the not too distant future. It is so already for most of us.

Some confreres living in this new reality, have already thought about how they are to act and to

react. We take an example from among many; the Centre Pédagogique Audio-Visuel in Haiti. R. Soler is the co-ordinator. There people learn to understand

the media by direct experiences. 85% of the population of the country of 5.000.000 are illiterate. Most of

them are young. Access to the world of the written is denied them.

If we must live our religious life in a world with its modern culture, it is urgent that we take stock, reflect and establish criteria governing our relationship to the media, its utilisation and the place we give it in our personal and community lives. We must not simply allow ourselves to be formed by the media. We must train ourselves and others to have a critical conscience vis-à-vis the media and so to be capable of exercising an influence on the world of mass communications.

The instant, the spectacular, fragmentation, simplification, world-wide coverage, profits and competition are the principal characteristics of information systems which are structurally incapable of distinguishing the true from the false.

(Monde Diplomatique, March 1994.)

By intensive application of photography and video the living experience of the moment risks being of secondary importance to the technical recording of the moment. (Prof. Berden, Utrecht.)

PERENNIAL QUESTIONS THAT CHALLENGE US.

1. Why communicate?

"The work of God is principally a work of communication. The inner life of the Trinity itself seems to consist in communication. The work of creation is a continuing work of communication, as existence itself is continually being communicated to all of God's creatures. The work of revelation is surely a work of communication. The Incarnation is THE communication. In the Church, it is our responsibility to communicate the truth and love of Jesus Christ." (Mgr. J. Foley, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications)

Our Spiritan Rule of Life begins with a quotation from the Gospel of St. Luke, 4: 18-19.

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the Good News to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord."

The Spiritan Rule of Life 16.1 states:

"So that the Christian witness may become integrated in the culture, reach people from within and become a force for liberation in their contemporary history, we strive in every way we can for a fruitful coming together of local cultural and religious traditions with the gospel of Christ." See also SRL 1,2,3,11,13,45.

"The Church must be the champion of spiritual values. She must be truly the voice of the authentic, the real, the permanent and the spiritual. That is why the Church must make its voice heard. It must use to the full all the means of mass communications available in such a way that they become a light and a leaven in the name of Christ." (Mgr. Kalilombé, Malawi)

Using the methods of communication only is not enough. We must research to find the best methods and we must recognise the mass media as being an authentic means of evangelization and human development. (Mgr. Andoh. Ghana)

2. Communicate, yes but how?

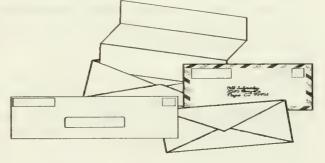
"There are two different things: On the one hand is the content and on the other a technology opening up vast possibilities. The technology has developed enormously. Has the content moved in step with the technology?" (J. Hogema, CSSp.)

Sister Marlene Scholz (Zimbabwe) wonders: "how can we communicate the content of our faith with means of communication formed and based in the culture?" She says she has come up with this response: "The faith culture of the Western world is too oriented to the written word and particularly towards books. It could follow other directions with a far greater effect especially in Africa but also in Europe. In evangelization we should make much more use of artistic expression like the plastic arts, poetry, music, drama and dancing. We must work with the means available on the spot not only to announce the gospel but also as a support for the faith."

"Communication includes a source of information which produces a message. Communication includes also a transmitter who treats the message in such a way as to make it transmittable. A channel is needed which is the

medium used to transmit the signal from the transmitter to the receiver. The receiver then reconstructs the message from the signal. Finally communication includes a recipient to whom the message is directed." (I.D. 9. Nov. 1973)

The message has to be translated into the language understood by those to whom the message is directed and it has to be adapted to the means they have at their disposal. The methods used will be determined by the aims, objective and target group.



a. The spoken word.

The spoken word is used most in communication. For a long time to come, it will be the method used in our mission particularly in the developing world. It is the cheapest and within everybody's grasp. It is so simple that we forget about it when speaking about communicating the gospel.

"An example of the importance of the spoken word is the catechist. He is not a person of exalted position nor is he weighted down with gadgets. He has not been trained to play on people's feelings or to seduce with sweet words. He is the man of a



powerful "Word". He has been trained to speak a word, based on relevant experience and finding resonance in the daily lives of his listeners. He is the man of the Word of God for daily life. Initiated into the Christian life, the catechist is also one who can communicate the spirit of Africa by drawing on the riches of the local culture." (P. Schouver, CSSp in "Medias")

Missionnaires" 1st trimestre 1993.)

b. The written word

This seems to be catered for reasonably well. When we look at our Congregation, some circumscriptions publish one, two or three magazines. "In Europe alone there are 675.000 subscribers to Spiritan magazines, reviews and bulletins and the annual print run is 2.200.000. One thing is clear; this is a job that must be taken seriously. It would be wrong to treat it lightly. We have a duty towards our subscribers of doing the job as seriously and as professionally as it deserves" Letter of Fr. Wijnen CSSp, July 14, 1993:

Spiritan News No. 94.

The following are the European magazines to which the numbers above mentioned "Pentecôte subscribe:

sur le monde" Belgium, France and Switzerland; "Echo de la Mission" and "Revue de St. Joseph" France; "Encontro" and "Acção Missionária" Portugal; "Kontinente" Germany; "Missionwide" England; "Outlook" Ireland; "Bijeen" Netherlands; "Missioneros Espiritanos" Spain and "Poslaniec" Poland.

c. Audio-visual

The use of slides, audio cassettes, video, radio as well as TV has grown quickly. This equipment can be found in many of our Spiritan communities. Very often they are not fully used because of a lack of formation and/or training. In order to answer to this need, circumscriptions have either set up their own training programmes or sent members to centres elsewhere.

We find an example of this in CIM (Centre d'Information Missionnaire) in our Mother House in Rue Lhomond, Paris, where our confreres Fr.-X. Roussel and L-M. Frioux work. CIM describes itself as a Multimedia Service with the following objectives: assure through its library, the collection,

> production and diffusion of educational material the cultural.

80% of all communication is non verbal. It is catechetical, theological, health and social areas of the different countries; put at the disposal of confreres its technology and offer training in audio-visual and computers to

those responsible for projects, enabling them to produce suitable programmes; have available to confreres and dioceses, training, advice and material adapted to each situation; assure the collection and the preservation of photo negatives and slides from the countries in which Spiritans work; produce on request whatever may be asked; give information and a training; advise on purchasing and buying materials in the fast developing computer area; build up a video library; be in relationship with funding agencies and show how to write up and present a project for aid.

3. At the heart of communication.

through our lives that the most frequent and

most important communication

happens

We must never forget that 80% of all communication is non verbal. The most frequent and most important communication is through our lives. It is the communication of ourselves. We walk here in the footsteps of Him whom we proclaim. Jesus announced the Good News and in the final analysis he communicated Himself. He even made a gift of his life: "take and eat all of you, this is my body".

MEDIA, A CHALLENGE FOR EVERYONE?

important element in communication. Nevertheless their presence is a reality and they are important. We would be flying in the face of reality should we ignore their existence. But how do we react when we read remarks such as: "The information system is perverted: dominated by television, trapped by the apparent, it shows without

understanding. It excludes from the

Taken alone, the technological means are not the most

sphere of the real that it does not show."(Time, 21 February 1994)

> "Complaining about bad media coverage is a vital part of the process of getting good media coverage. The media always have an eye to the consumer. If a story is wrong whether through inaccuracy, distortion or unfairness, it is important that the journalist be told so. It is important that the inaccurate facts are

pinpointed. People complain about the media across the pub counter or in the local supermarket, but very few take the trouble to lodge an accurate complaint about the offending item. When making a complaint the currency to deal in is facts. (Intercom, October 1984)

The article in "Intercom" tells us that the media are very sensitive to criticism from the public. If that is true, it says that we can have a certain influence on what they present.

Before we complain about what the media present, we must know what in fact they do present. This is not easy. Having some feelings about it is not

enough. Those who do complain are quickly put in their place by communication professionals if their complaints are poorly formulated or incorrect in details.

"Intercom" puts us on our guard. "The opportunity to preach the Good News is always available. Are we using this opportunity to the fullest possible extent? If we are not, then blaming the media for our problems is a very poor substitute" (Intercom, October 1984)

Certainly, the media challenge us. They can be used as a means of indoctrination, exploitation and domination. But they offer as well the possibility of expressing our deepest feelings. They can help us to reach out to a far wider public, opening to them the witness of our most firmly held convictions. We should view the media in this light. We need to move forward. Is it not time to apply fully what "Aetates Novae" said to us? "Education and training in the media of communication should form an integral part of the training of priests and pastoral agents."

It is clear that it is necessary to educate as many people as possible to understand the techniques and the language used by the media as well as to understand the media itself. With such a

background knowledge, reaction will be to the point. It will bring more ease and confidence. The necessity to be exact, to make comparisons, to make inquiries and competent research will bring precise results. This knowledge will moreover, help us to live our lives more aware of the reality around us. In this way more people will be able to benefit from the teaching of the Church as well as from human development in general. Our work for Justice and Peace will also profit because we will know

better how to communicate and to make ourselves understood.



"We want ourselves to be listeners, committed to the search for all kinds of information. For this we depend on the sources of information, but we want to be actors in order to respond to events, to participate in the formation of public opinion and to be part of conscientisation, convinced that public opinion is a responsible and powerful means for change." (Action Catholique pour l'Abolition de la Torture)

All Spiritans agree that newspapers. fax, radio, computers and TV are part of to-day's culture. The Pope, bishops and laity speak about the importance of communication through the media. Consequently

we must take the issue seriously. In the words of McLuhan "The medium is the message" and the message must be integrated into the new medium.



Being missionaries, we are presented with an important task. We have responsibilities on different levels. By vocation we are communicators, bearers

of a message. How are we to be sure on our side that communication is adapted to the situation in the society in which we live?

Those confreres who have an electronic mail address are kindly invited to communicate it to the Generalate in Rome.

Whenever a confrere produces a work in communication eg. has produced a video or audio cassette, has written a book, a play, etc. he is kindly asked to inform the Generalate. Others will be interested!

We are facing a big challenge. However, we are ideally placed to respond to it. We work in many nations and many cultures. By their mission, Spiritans are involved in communicating the Gospel both by the witness of their lifestyle and by preaching and teaching. To help them in their mission, they may or may not use technology. Becoming better trained in the use of the media will help us to inculturate the "message" at all levels of society and in a language that can be understood. Even the use of modern techniques has to be adapted to our audience.

In the beginning of this paper it was mentioned that about fifty confreres communicated directly with the Generalate saying that they were committed to social communications. Does each Spiritan know who is the nearest confrere with experience in this field? In some circumscriptions such a confrere may not be available but there are probably others (religious, diocesan or lay) working in communications.

It is important to integrate the experience of these confreres into the mission of the whole circumscription where this is not yet the case. It could help others who are working on a smaller or We want to live our mission and our religious life in fidelity to the Holy Spirit. That fidelity has lead the Spiritans to take on many services in the Church during a long history of almost three hundred years. It has also shaped our Spiritan Life. The Incarnation of the Word of God in history, accomplished in Jesus, continues in the Church and in humanity. The Incarnation is exciting because it is through it that God reveals himself to men and women of all time. Revelation and its realisation, evangelization, has always the same content but the methods of its transmission are determined by the culture of those who receive and of those who proclaim. Evangelization is always done in the concrete.

more local basis. It would be worthwhile investigating the possibility of organising sessions to pool experiences to see how local means already available, can be used more effectively. It will be for the sake of the Mission, for the sake of preaching the Message of the Good News.

CONCLUSION.

Perhaps some confreres, reading this paper will think that it is not written for them believing that they are too old or live in areas too remote, or because they have no talents for it or no means to get involved in modern technology of communication. But what has been said earlier is equally valid for all: the basis of communication is our person. As long as we are alive, there is always room for improvement. We are convinced that we have a mission as a Congregation, a very important message to communicate to a world yearning for meaning. Should we not use all the means available?





INFORMATION DOCUMENTATION

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GENERAL COUNCIL

NOVEMBER 1995

THE ENLARGED GENERAL COUNCIL AT DAKAR, 1995

A "KAIROS" FOR THE CONGREGATION

This is a message from the General Council to all confreres after the E.G.C. at Dakar.

You have already received news and other accounts of the meeting at Dakar. In this paper, we would like to propose for your consideration our own reactions, the calls to action and the general guidelines as we perceive them.

A. THE COMMITMENT OF THE CONGREGATION IN AFRICA

1. A return to the beginnings of our missionary experience

One hundred and fifty years ago, our Congregation committed itself to a colonised Africa that had been ravaged by the slave trade. It was a courageous undertaking - confreres risking their lives so that the African people might be liberated from the evils of slavery, to which the island of Gorée is still a witness today. Despite the prevailing pessimism and the context of violence, a trust grew up between the missionaries and the Africans who accepted the Gospel.

2. A turning point for the spiritan mission in Africa

Today, we are missionary partners with the local Churches; they have the primary responsibility and we have total confidence in them.

Our Congregation itself is becoming African. Out of 767

young people in formation, including Postulants, 599 are Africans. In 15 years' time, Africans will certainly be the largest group in the Congregation. Within the new structures that have been set up, they can develop an African way of being Spiritan and exercise their own responsibility. More and more, it is they who will be the agents of spiritan missionary activity in Africa, while often living and working with Spiritans from elsewhere in coresponsibility.

3. The African experience has marked the Congregation

A South American confrere, who was struck by the phrase of Libermann written on a banner hanging in the meeting room at Dakar, "I have given my heart to the Africans", wrote the following:

"I got to know the Congregation through Irish and German missionaries who carried Africa in their hearts and their heads... The African experience has marked the

Congregation so deeply that, in my opinion, it has become an essential element of our charism... Our "African-ness" does not just spring from the number of African confreres we have nor from the extent of our commitments in Africa. It is to be found in the spiritual experience of Libermann and in the convictions that drove so many men to give their lives for the mission... One could say that it is not possible to be authentically spiritan if one does not personally retrace the journey the Congregation has travelled that was begun by our founders. This journey is saturated with Africa."

4. We still have a strong commitment in the new African context

This is certainly not the moment to lessen our involvement, when the continent is going through great distress and is being subjected to new kinds of slavery. Confreres have remained in the most difficult situations and are standing with the peoples of Africa in their struggle for life, for justice and peace, even at times giving their lives.

"I will always bless you, Lord, because you have delivered me from certain death this day... I have nothing of value to give you, so I fervently give you my heart and my life, free from all illusions". (Prayer of an Angolan confrere who had escaped death).

5. A new period of our mission in the world, starting from Africa

The future of the Congregation is not just in Africa. It is equally in Latin America, Asia, Oceania, and still in the countries of the North. But Africa has already begun to play a determining role in spiritan missions throughout the world.



My heart is for the Africans. All for Africa. Fr. Libermann

Of the 41 young confreres who will be ready for a first appointment in 1996, 35 are Africans. The majority of young Africans have been appointed to African countries, but some have been sent to Latin America, North America, Europe and even as far as Papua New Guinea. Africans will take part in all the new projects of the Congregation.

B. OLD AND NEW FRONTIERS THAT HAVE TO BE CROSSED

SPIRITAN MISSION TODAY

1. The focus of our missionary engagements

"The trouble with the clergy has always been that they have got stuck in the ideas of the past... We must embrace the new order of things in all openness and simplicity and bring to it the spirit of the Gospel " (Libermann 1848).

The report of the Superior General locates the mission of the Congregation in the contemporary world, which is marked by a secularised society, a meeting or conflict of cultures, the dominance of market-forces, a society that is consumerist and media-based, a society that is lawless, full of fear, conflicts and violence. The report gives a panorama of our present engagements and new projects. It tries to mark out the road that the Congregation is taking today: the importance of the witness given by a faithful, continuing presence, the importance of the quality of our personal commitment and our relationships; the balance to be sought between our traditional and new undertakings; the stress to be put on first evangelisation, inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, and work for justice and peace.

This stress comes out clearly in the replies to the preparatory questionnaire (RPQ), which adds: "Even where

we are appointed to pastoral ministry in the local Church, our work is marked by our cross-cultural experience; we try to make that Church more missionary. And the work of many of us within the Congregation is aimed at making it ever more missionary and spiritan".

2. Action for Justice and Peace: Report of Coordinator

The challenge of the world today

There is a type of aid coming from the rich countries that has sent the poorest countries down a one-way-street of debt, leading inexorably to ever greater poverty and social regression.



The Slave House, Gorée

Arms sales - 388 billion dollars per year - feed the violence that is ravaging the world. The irresponsible

behaviour of consumerist societies is destroying the environment for everyone living on this planet. Overpopulation, poverty and violence are causing mass migrations. 20% of the world's population owns more than 80% of the world's resources.

Sinful structures and the liberating Cross

How did life on earth arrive at this stage as we are about to enter the 21st century? Structures that are characterised by egoism and the desire to dominate always work in favour of the strongest. They can be called "structures of sin". Jesus came into this world on the side of the little ones. He witnessed to the goodness of God amongst them in the face of the powerful. The forces of death in his society dragged him to Calvary. But because he died out of love, his cross has become a Cross of liberation.

By our presence in situations of death, we want to bring the hope of the resurrection into the social, political and ecological dimensions of life on this earth. Spiritans are engaged in trying to help refugees and in many other concrete works of liberation, in networks for justice and peace, in groups studying international debt, and in Amnesty International.

3. Some recent spiritan engagements

The EGC gave its approval to pursue some new engagements and projects:

- a plan to help refugees in Guinea who have come from Sierra Leone and Liberia;
- an international spiritan group for Mozambique;
- a study with a view to a new spiritan engagement in Asia;
- a study for a regional organisation of Spiritans in Oceania.

In the context of re-vitalising the Congregation in these difficult times, the EGC asked for an evaluation of its organisation and the formation of its members.

C. SPIRITAN FORMATION

The "Guide for Formation" that was accepted by the Dakar assembly, is the result of many meetings and consultations. It takes its inspiration from the contemporary experience of Spiritans, from our own traditions, and from the experience of the universal Church. On-going formation was discussed at greater length by the EGC, and it is the subject of a provisional document which will eventually be incorporated, after further discussion, into the "Guide for Formation" (GF). It is worth giving some serious reflection to the spirit behind all this work on spiritan formation today. Let us try to explain it a little further.

1. The spirit behind the documents on initial and on-going formation

To clarify what is fundamental and common to all

SRL 105 asked each Province to work out its guidelines for formation. But current challenges, as well as the tradition of our Congregation, urges us to unity. The Itaici Chapter (36.3.1) asked us to draw out the fundamental common strands of our formation.

A preparation for our particular mission in all its ramifications

Missionary situations have changed, and have led us to redefine our spiritan vocation. Formation must prepare us for all aspects of our particular mission: we want to move among groups of people not yet touched, or hardly touched, by the witness of the Gospel, among believers of other religions and Churches, among those who are neglected or pushed aside by society; our call is to dialogue and share our faith with them, to work with them for liberation and a better life, for justice, peace, and respect for creation.



First Cycle (Oporto, Portugal)

A transformation of ourselves

Spiritan formation is much more than just acquiring knowledge or "savoir-faire": it initiates us into how to live as a Spiritan. It calls for a transformation of ourselves. It passes on to us the missionary spiritual experience of the Congregation. We are given not just a missionary and religious outlook, but "habits of heart", which we used to call "virtues", a training to reach decisions in the line of our Rule of Life:

"The Spirit calls us to continual conversion, shapes our personal and community lives, makes us partakers in the death and resurrection mystery of Jesus and prepares us to make the total gift of ourselves for the Kingdom" (SRL 10).

Formation from life and for the whole of life

The above quotation from SRL 10 suggests that formation is not just a stage we go through, but something that is lifelong. "...In each age of our lives, including our retirement, fresh appeals, springing from new situations, reach us. (GF 9).

We perceive spiritan formation in terms of private tuition given to us by the experiences of life, rather than according to any scholastic model; so much so that its fundamental aspects are the experience itself of apostolic commitment and the interpreting of what we see and hear in the light of christian Revelation and our spiritan tradition. Some of the new disciplines help in this interpretation, discernment and concrete engagement: the religious sciences, and the soundest of the methods and established facts of a certain number of the human sciences.

Integrated growth of the person

Real spiritual, intellectual and apostolic progress demands an all-round growth of the person, that is to say, a satisfying human equilibrium in the physical, affective and social domains. This needs clarity and the help of a spiritual director is essential. But it is worth remembering that it is easier to keep your balance when walking than when standing still to take your pulse!

Initiation into a style of life

We have to be initiated into the riches and the demands of community life, which is "an essential element in the spiritan way of life" (SRL 28).



On-going formation in groups (Paraguay 1995)

In a world often obsessed by possessions and consumerism, but at the same time bruised by misery and crying inequalities, we clearly hear the call....to practise justice, to share, to stand in solidarity with the poor, to be moderate in our use of material things (GF 28).

We are also initiated into the life of the local and universal Church, and we grow in faith and charity together with people and pastors of our Church of origin and the Church that receives us.

We have to learn how to maintain a genuine relationship with our family in the light of our spiritan commitment, conscious both of all they have given to us and of our call to leave them, not in order to cut ourselves off from them, but to allow our hearts to open wider,...a call that is also extended to them.

2. The nature of on-going formation: a missionary spirituality that is lived

To keep ourselves truly alive

The aim of on-going formation is to keep us as alive and awake as possible, so that our life might be an exciting adventure right until the end, a constant spiritual searching, an openness to new and deeper encounters and a genuine commitment to serve the poor.

"We believe that our christian and apostolic vocation brings with it the opportunity ... of obtaining a greater quality and fullness of life and relationships. If only we can learn to adopt an attitude of alert vigilance, we can become open to unsuspected developments in our vocation and to a renewal of our apostolic enthusiasm" (GF 104.1).



Fr General greets 'à l'Africaine' (Nairobi)

On-going formation throughout our lives

The objective of on-going formation can be achieved in two complementary ways: by developing habits in our daily routine of life and, from time to time, by more intensive periods of renewal.

The documents approved by the EGC consider first of all this daily renewal of ourselves. It seems that at this point in the life of our Congregation, we have come to a greater realisation that our strongest asset is our life-witness, the christian authenticity of our commitment. But our secularised environment, often foreign or even opposed to our convictions, is no help to our efforts to live by faith, hope and charity. So the essential foundations and convictions on which we build our lives have to be continually renewed. Hence the absolute necessity of making time for personal prayer, a full community life, and spiritan meetings in our circumscriptions...

More prolonged periods of renewal

"A recyclage or sabbatical gives us the chance to step back from our normal work and ambiance; the resulting psychological and spiritual freedom helps us to get things in focus, to understand better what has gone before and what is happening now, so that we can be more open to future possibilities". (GF 138).

The EGC wants us to accept the idea of on-going formation as the normal thing. Every Spiritan must be convinced of its necessity and should be ready to do something about it. It should be discussed at all levels by the confreres concerned and the superiors of the Congregation, and the latter should take the necessary steps to make it possible.

A missionary spirituality

In applying on-going formation to the different aspects of our vocation, a spirituality emerges that brings a unity to our commitment: a wisdom which is both "human", and evangelical, personal and communitarian, a gift to receive and a task to be carried out (GF 122).

Certain elements are of a personal nature, other are peculiar to groups of Spiritans, yet others are common to the whole of our religious family. The latter is particularly so of our apostolic orientation which makes us open to the inspiration of the Spirit to whom we are consecrated (SRL 5-6; 8-11; 85-88).

We try to recognise the fruits of the Spirit in the living witness that is found both inside and beyond the Church. We try to live in a state of "practical union" and docility to the calls of the Spirit.

"When we make efforts to identify ourselves with the poorest,...our ministry becomes a place where we meet the God celebrated in the Magnificat" (GF 126).

In short, the apostolate gives food to our prayer, which is the place where we identify, in our lived experience, the fruits of the Spirit and the fruits of sin.

3. Some concrete directives

Sessions of on-going formation can last a few months or a whole year. According to SRL 145, the longer periods should occur about every ten years. The EGC indicated certain times of our lives where evaluation and support are specially needed; so they suggest the following rhythm of longer periods of recyclage in the life of a Spiritan:



Going to a meeting (Masai Country, Tanzania)

- the start of the active life, a period of about 5 years, where confreres need a special initiation, accompaniment and support;
- the middle of life, around 40-50, a decisive stage of transition, where one can draw out the lessons learnt from

- a long active period and lay down the main orientations of the next phase of life; this is a suitable time for a more extended sabbatical;
- the beginning of the "third age", an ideal time to prepare for a new type of consecration to mission, a new growth in our human and spiritual lives.

Changes of appointment and times of exceptional difficulties, are also occasions when a period of recollection and withdrawal could be beneficial.

These periods of renewal should be arranged after a consultation between the confrere and the superiors of circumscriptions of origin and appointment.

Spiritan regions are encouraged to set up international sessions of recyclage. There is a growing need to establish centres specially adapted for this type of meeting, if possible, in places that have a significant meaning for Spiritans.

The General Council will support these initiatives and gather together the information regarding time, place and the type of renewal that is envisaged.

The question of financing these special periods of renewal should be worked out by the community, the circumscription of appointment, sometimes with help from the Province of origin and exceptionally, from Cor Unum, although most of this latter fund is reserved for the needs of initial formation. It is also in order to ask the diocese, where we are working, for financial help.

D. THE ORGANISATION OF THE CONGREGATION

1. A particular vision of the problem of organisation

The vision behind the document on organisation of the Congregation that was accepted by the EGC could be described as follows:

Starting from missionary experience

Our missionary life and methods have changed so our organisation must be adapted to the new situation. Systems of organisation come into being through a mixture of concrete needs and internal convictions, prior to being spelt out systematically. It was thus that SRL encapsulated certain organisational evolutions and Itaici encouraged us to continue along this road of evaluation. So the propositions made in the document

are part of a process that is already underway.

Guidelines for the evolution of our structures

This seems to be the moment to clarify the lines along which the evolution of the structures of our Congregation should proceed, following the road that the Spirit appears to be indicating that spiritan mission should take, rather than simply trying to improve our present structures.

This is why we are not in favour of any changes to SRL, which remains our point of reference and already contains in itself plenty of possibilities for adaptation (cf. for example, SRL 163). Instead, we are proposing to you a guide that will give general orientations for present and future decisions concerning the organisation of the Congregation.

2. Movements towards new structures

An increase in the places where we work and the circumscription of origin of Spiritans

There has been a considerable increase in the number of places in which we are working, normally outside the areas of the old districts, usually in fairly small groups, and often working according to a different style.

Most circumscriptions are now providing new members, above all in the South, while the number of vocations in the North has dwindled. Districts which are now receiving very few reinforcements from the North are seeking them in the new Foundations and Provinces.



New relations between circumscriptions (EGC. Dakar)

Autonomy of circumscriptions

Although they are small, the new groups are often autonomous either because they are far away from large circumscriptions or because they are international. The Foundations have been made autonomous so that they can develop their own style and responsibility.

New relationships between circumscriptions

The circumscriptions, which are far more numerous than they were, are becoming aware, for different reasons, of their weaknesses and limitations. They are collaborating amongst themselves. The older Provinces are giving financial support to the new Foundations and Provinces, while the latter are beginning to send personnel for missionary undertakings in the North. Circumscriptions are also getting together regionally. So internationality is growing all the time in districts and new groups, and even in Provinces and Foundations.

The meaning of these developments

We can see in these developments that the Spirit is leading us towards a spiritan mission without domination, but lived out in co-responsibility, giving an example of unity in diversity in a world that is being torn apart.

3. The EGC has given guidelines for this evolution, to help to organize spiritan life in a more efficient and relevant way

a) Guidelines for the types of circumscription

Some types of circumscription seem destined to get smaller and evolve

Traditional districts are losing some of their responsibilities which are being taken over by the local clergy; the personnel coming from older provinces is far less; the arrival of confreres from Foundations and Provinces in those countries or from that region changes their style; they are caught up in the development of Foundations and gradually relinquish the leadership of the spiritan mission where a new Province is developing.

In line with the evolution described above, it does not seem wise to create any more so-called "Provincial Groups", i.e. groups that are attached to a particular Province. Those which already exist could develop into international groups and attach themselves to the region to which their country belongs.

Some forms of circumscription are developing with further changes

The Province: More then ever, this remains the basic unit. In fact, Provinces are taking over what used to be the prerogative of districts: not only are they still supporting far-off districts, but they themselves have missionary engagements in their own area. And new Provinces are being born, usually from Foundations, where originally there were districts.

The Foundation: This is an entity in process of becoming a Province. The Dakar document restates the conditions laid down by the Chapter of 1992 governing the transition of a Foundation into a Province. It also spells out certain conditions necessary before a circumscription can begin to accept spiritan vocations, as well as those to be fulfilled for the launching of a Foundation.

The Group: This corresponds to the former "District", but in general it is smaller and, nearly always, international. To assure its autonomy, it normally has a Major Superior.



International Meeting CSSp (Paraguay)

b) The EGC encourages internationality

Internationality can add to the value of the missionary witness. It has to be done step by step. Every Spiritan retains his special ties, both rights and duties, with his Province of origin, in accordance with SRL.But we are convinced that the cultural and ecclesial characteristics that we bring with us are an enrichment for the Congregation.

c) The EGC encourages new relationships between circumscriptions for mutual support

It encourages the fusion of circumscriptions where they are side by side and are serving communities of people who enjoy a genuine unity. Sometimes districts join with new Provinces; others collaborate with them whilst maintaining their autonomy.

When the Congregation takes on a new engagement, outside of existing circumscriptions, in some cases a simple community will be set up which will preferably come under the jurisdiction of the circumscription which is nearest to hand. If it involves a larger number of confreres, then it will be set up as a Group.

As for appointment and rotation of personnel, as well as finance, the group will turn to the Provinces of origin of its members, or even to other circumscriptions, and to the General Council. Regular contact will be necessary between these circumscriptions to ensure the stability of the group. This also holds true for old districts which become international.

The General Council has been asked to encourage circumscriptions to develop their regional organisation. Gradually the regions are replacing the old networks of districts attached to a northern Province. Often several districts and groups form a regional entity around a Foundation or a new Province, to which they direct the vocations coming from that region.

4. Further guidelines for organization and solidarity

The General Council will make more use of the possibilities given to it by SRL to take new initiatives and to intervene in the distribution of personnel, especially as regards new projects and formation.

The EGC also made some precisions regarding organisation and solidarity. It encourages circumscriptions to give all their aid through the medium of Cor Unum. If bilateral aid is given, the General Council should be informed.

The priority for Cor Unum is formation. As regards new or non self-sufficient apostolic projects, new sources of finance should be looked for, relying more on aid agencies and the generosity of christians.

E. THE EGC HELPS US TO IDENTIFY THE SPIRIT THAT

ENERGIZES THE SPIRITAN OF TODAY

"The spirit which invigorates Spiritans at this time could be described in these words: to be at the service of the poor, to be open to where the Spirit is leading us, to read our tradition into the actuality of today's mission, to renew our community life and to live in mutual support of each other". (RPQ).

Despite all the difficulties that the Congregation is going through, the EGC showed considerable generosity and courage in supporting initiatives in the service of the most neglected. The response to the calls for help has shown that many are ready to take part in these new projects. The assembly showed a particular concern for distressing situations, and for issues of justice and peace, as if these somehow strike a chord in the deepest feelings of our Congregation.

New possibilities opening for the future

We must make use of the new systems of communication now available for the animation of the Congregation and the sharing of information regarding issues of justice.

The Provinces of the North are looking for a new dynamism through closer collaboration and the welcoming of confreres from the South.



Opening to new horizons. (Pakistan)

At this time when mission is becoming less clerical, the EGC has asked us to promote the vocation of spiritan brother.

A lay associate took part in the EGC and pointed to the possibilities and new resources that this movement represents for spiritan mission.

The importance given to prayer became apparent in the careful preparation of the liturgy and the fervour with which confreres participated. These were the central moments of the meeting where we were able to prepare ourselves for discernment. The opening retreat invited us to take up Lectio Divina" according to the traditional method, which is now making a come-back as a sure way of christian renewal. It was significant how much stress was put on this aspect of our lives when it came to the question of on-going formation, as if we were more than ever convinced that the Spirit is leading us, and that "if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labour".

The intervention of the Co-ordinator of the History Group, which was set up to prepare for the celebration of our spiritan anniversaries, revealed the great interest that many confreres have in our sources and our spiritan history.

One of the most gratifying experiences of the EGC was the desire of everybody to meet as brothers and to respect each other's point of view. An extraordinary convergence of opinion emerged. For example, when the Mozambique project was raised, those in charge of the circumscriptions directly concerned immediately made a unanimous decision to set up an international group, made up of two international teams, attached to the South-Central African region.

The financial report revealed a considerable increase in the contributions to Cor Unum. A retirement fund was set up for the new circumscriptions that do not yet have a retirement scheme of their own. These figures are the concrete evidence of solidarity in practice. The EGC discussed the possibilities for collecting funds to finance the new projects that have the greatest need of support.

At Dakar, once again we became aware of our weakness in personnel, the fragility of our communities and the difficulties of our mission, but without in any way becoming discouraged. We went home strengthened by a renewed vision of our spiritan mission and a greater sense of the way that we depend on each other.

"It was the Holy Spirit who brought us together despite all our diversities. In our Congregation, differences do not disappear; it is hardly surprising if everything does not end in one clear and distinct orientation. But one is nevertheless left with a feeling of solidarity, which unites



EGC95, Dakar: Delegates:: L - R:

Front Row: Frs M. Keane (Ireland), Z, Bobrowski (Poland), B.Ellison (The Gambia), P. Doran (Papua New Guinea),
A. Shao (EAP), L. Pochon (Switzerland), G. Vuittenez (Madagascar), S. Castriani (Generalate),
Second Row: Frs G. Odigbo (Generalate), J. Kwofie (WAF), P. Iwashita (Brazil), Br J. Blanco (Paraguay), Frs B. Diémé (FAC),
P. Schouver (Superior General), J. Devine (SCAR), Y. le Quéré (Guiana), Ms M. Beusmans (Netherlands), Fr J-P. Hoche (France).
Back Row: Frs M. McMahon (East Africa), D. Donnelan (Pakistan), O. Pérez González (Puerto Rico), J-M. Jolibois (Generalate),
R. Tabard (Congo), Seán Mullin (Sierra Leone) O. van den Brink (Netherlands), M. Dominique (Haīti), P. Ward (England),
M. White (USA/W), B. Kelly (Generalate), G. Vieira (Senegal), M. Onwuemelie (Nigeria), F. Wijnen (Generalate) B. Bongo (Generalate)

in the same mission both the old and sick missionary and the one who still enjoys the vigour of youth in the front line of missionary engagement." (A participant).

We have all had the same sort of experience during spiritan

reunions. But we should allow ourselves to express these profound feelings more often in our everyday life and work. We often fail to make the effort to find out what exactly the Spirit is asking of us, what is possible, and how we should set about it.

Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch (Luke 5.4).

Rome, 10 October 1995

On behalf of the General Council,

Pierre Schouver CSSp. Superior General.

Schon

General Reference documents

Reports presented to the EGC:

The Superior General (SGR), which you are invited to read (36 pages); Finance;
Justice and Peace;
International Group of Historical Research;
Secretariat for Formation;
Lay Associates;
Replies to the preliminary questionnaire (RPQ).

Documents:

Guide for Formation (GF);
Draft of the section on on-going formation;
Draft of the Guide for Organisation.
Spiritan News No 108 with supplements and current news sheets.

You have received some of these documents. You can find others with the Superior of your circumscription or your delegate to the EGC. Failing that, you can make enquiries to the General Secretariat in Rome.

OUR CONGREGATION IN THE WORLD TODAY

The trouble with the clergy in recent times, is that they have got stuck in the ideas of the past. The world moves on, and our enemies have adapted their armory to the spirit of the age while we are left way behind! Without abandoning the spirit of the Gospel, we must get up to date, do good and combat evil in the spirit of today.

We have to confront the enemy where he is, and not allow him to strenghten his position by looking for him where he is no longer to be found. If we just clamp ourselves to the past and cling on to the habits and ideas of yesterday, all our efforts will be wasted and the enemy will meanwhile be digging in to the new order of things. So let us welcome the new world with openness and simplicity and bring the spirit of the Gospel to it; in this way, we will be sanctifying the world and the world will come to us.

(One month after the revolution in France of 1848, Fr Libermann is answering a Sulpician who asked whether a priest should vote in the forthcoming election. ND X p. 151.)



NFORMATION DOCUMENTATION

I/D 53

GENERAL COUNCIL

DECEMBER 1996

NEW INITIATIVE IN ASIA — A CALL OF THE SPIRIT TO US

Of the estimated 5.76 billion people in the world, 3.5 billion live in Asia. China alone has now reached 1.2 billion or more than the total number of the world's Catholics. Despite rapid economic growth in some countries, a huge number of the world's poor live in Asia. Asia is the cradle of the world's great religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Judaism, Confucianism and Shintoism as well as Christianity itself. At the moment Catholics represent only 2.8% of its population.

A. Asia and the Congregation: Our Story so Far

"The 'ends of the earth' to which the gospel

must be brought are growing ever more distinct.

(Pope John Paul II:: Red. Miss. No.40)

1. The Society of the Holy Spirit and Asia

lready in the eighteenth century, missionaries from the Holy Spirit Seminary in Paris had, under the auspices of the PEM (Foreign Missions of Paris),

done very valuable work when much of Asia was without other missionaries and the persecution of Christians was widespread. However, with the focus of the Congregation firmly on Africa, the last Spiritans left India at the beginning of

2. The past is prologue

We have heard two challenging calls in our recent history. The edition of I/D N° 7, summarising the

Enlarged General Council of 1976, tells us of a very significant happening in our history.

"The eve of Pentecost was the day when three projects of highest priority were voted unanimously - Angola, Paraguay and Pakistan. Three projects, three continents! Three projects undertaken in coresponsibility by all the

major Superiors. Three projects which, taken together, will test some of our options in Mission today and our will to begin anew: urgent missionary situations; international teams; poverty and liberation; first evangelization; dialogue with Islam and an opening to the Far East! There

deed, on the eve of Pente-

was great happiness in-Redemptoris Missio cost".

> Is the present moment in our history not something remarkably similar as we further open ourselves to Asia while, as the Enlarged General Council in Dakar put it "still maintaining our privileged ties with Africa"?

3.Indian Ocean Foundation (FOI)

Population growth in non-Christian countries of the South and the East is constantly increasing the number of people who remain unaware of Christ's Redemption. We therefore need to direct our attention towards those geographical areas and cultural settings. All who believe in Christ should feel, as an integral part of their faith, an apostolic concern to pass on to others its light and joy."

> Inspired particularly by the presence of some of the Great World Religions, notably Islam and Hinduism in Mauritius, the District of Mauritius together with Reunion and Madagascar, began a formation programme in 1969. The special interest of the "Indian Ocean Foundation" was, and continues to be, the formation of confreres for mission

in Asia or among Asian minorities in other countries. Today, two of its members are part of the team in Pakistan.

4. Pakistan

For almost twenty years our confreres have worked in Pakistan with a minority Church amongst people who themselves are also ethnic minorities in the country They live in two communities in Rahim Yar Khan and in Sukkur. Their ministry takes two forms. Their principal aim is a commitment to the Marwari Bhils and the second is ministry among the Punjabi Christians.

Our confreres will hand over the ministry in Sukkur and found a new community in Sadiqabad, committed to the Marwari people. They have set a most relevant example of deep community life, where each member is valued for what he is and not for what he has or can do. Each is free to develop and express his own gifts in teamwork both with his confreres and with others.

5. Elsewhere in the Congregation

Over the years our Congregation has been enriched by the presence of confreres of Asiatic origin. The original mission to Paraguay by Trinidad included such. The present Provincial of the Brazilian Province is of Japanese origin. Most recently, Vietnamese entered our formation programmes in the Province of Germany, and of U.S.A/West.

6. The call at Itaici

As they arrived in Itaici

THE question in the forefront of the delegates' minds was:

"Where is the Spirit leading us?" The very methodology chosen for the Chapter underlined the openness to identify, and attempt to respond to the call of the Spirit at this moment of our history.

"We heard a call for an extension of our missionary activity in the Asiatic world. The presentations from

Pakistan and Mauritius and the reports from the Indian Ocean Foundation drew our attention to the enormous missionary task in Asia and the relatively small response of our Congregation so far to the needs of the people in that vast area. As yet the message of the Gospel has scarcely found a home there. These facts cannot simply be overlooked by an international congregation which is missionary by nature.

Hence the plea that the Congregation should consider another initiative in Asia. The ultimate aim of this initiative would be to contribute to making the Asian Church more missionary and self-evangelising" (Itaici, No.7)

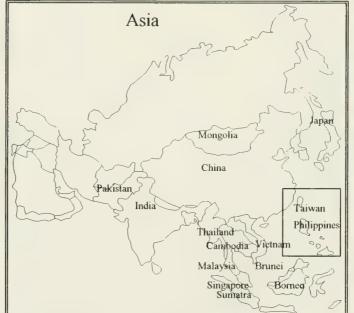
7. The importance of this call

As has happened many times in our history, we are called to risk and stretch ourselves. This comes at a time when many are preoccupied with dwindling numbers and a rapidly ageing section of the Congregation. Many places are seeking personnel and, yet, the Spirit calls us to "launch"

into the deep" once more. We are asked to broaden our horizons and, particularly, to enter into closer contact with some of the great world religions and to transcend cultural and linguistic divides.

In doing this, we seek an important experience which will be mutually enriching for ourselves and for the places and people to whom we go. It will offer us a different missionary experience as we go to learn and to

share the lives, culture and spirituality of other people. We will help some of the local churches there to become more missionary and self-evangelising. It could also become an enrichment of the Congregation should it result in the foundation there of the Congregation itself. It will be helpful to have Asian Spiritans as missionaries in their own continent or elsewhere.



B. Responding to the Call of the Chapter

1. Gathering Information and Defining Initial Criteria

s a first step to help us answer the call of the Chapter, the General Council asked Fr Brian McLaughlin to carry out the preliminary research. We did not have specific invitations but only heard of Bishops of Asian countries who would welcome missionaries. He began, over a period of ten weeks, gathering information through contacts with fifteen Congregations, entities and individuals in U.S., France, Ireland and Rome and with confreres who work in Asia or have special links with it.

Fr McLaughlin then came to Rome to have a meeting with the Council. During our reflections we tried to establish some initial criteria to determine which countries were to

be visited. The criteria below were to be checked out during the visits to enable us to make the choice for our missions:

- the possibility of getting a visa as missionaries;
- the possibility of contact and encounter with Asian cultures and the great world religions;
- the possibility of contributing something significant to the local church;
- directed to an area of high density population;
- work with the poor and underprivileged;
- the possibility of community life;

- the possibility of teamwork, with others and among ourselves;
- places which offer the possibility of our African confreres being part of the new initiative, given that in fifteen years' time we will be very much dependent on them for personnel;
- the degree of difficulty involved in language learning and inculturation.

On the basis of these and the information received, the Council decided that he should visit Thailand, Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan. He would also make a brief visit from Hong Kong to Macau and mainland China.

Do we need Asia or does Asia need us, or both?

As an international missionary society,
should we be more widely spread in
"the other half of the world"?
Can we afford not to be in touch with
the great world religions of
Buddhism Confucianism and Hinduism. Missiology and spirituality today are so
influenced by these great and ancient faiths,
can we remain impervious to them?
(Spiritan Research and Animation Centre, 1991(SRAC))

Although, according to the initial criteria, we decided not to include countries where missionaries could not obtain entry visas because of the current political regimes, exceptions were made for Vietnam and China.

Of particular significance for us at the moment is the interest in our Congregation of some Vietnamese, living outside their own

country. Going to China must also remain a hope for the future, given its cultural and religious richness, importance and challenges. Thus, Vietnam and China are places where we believe we should go if and when this becomes possible.

2. Visits

a. Exploratory visit by Fr McLaughlin

rom mid-January during a period of eighteen weeks, Fr McLaughlin visited the selected countries. He was warmly received by other missionaries, the clergy and religious in the different countries.

In the course of his contacts he tried to assess the situation in each place against the above criteria as agreed beforehand with the Council. Reading and listening to his report which he gave us in June following this first visit, we got a sense of a "new world". We were struck by the huge cul-

tural and language differences. But, the most striking feeling was one of excitement.

We then had to decide between the different countries to be revisited for more detailed research to help us arrive at more precise missionary projects. There were no firm invitations received from Thailand and Japan.

After many hours of reading, studying and discussing, we opted for Vietnam, Philippines and Taiwan as countries that met our initial criteria. It was then decided that the Superior General together with Brian McLaughlin would

visit these three countries for a more in-depth study, getting in touch with the different bishops, priests and laypeople, visiting dioceses and parishes and other works.

b. Visitation by the Superior General together with Fr McLaughlin

On August 01, Fr Schouver arrived in Ho Chi Minh City, where he was met by our Vietnamese confrere, Fr. Binh Thè Quach, of the USA/W Province, who was in the country to visit his family. He was

"enchanted by what he had witnessed in a few, short days: a dignified and hard-working people, a poor Church which suffers and resists but which is still full of signs of Christian generosity among the religious met."

On August 06, he travelled on to Philippines. During the rest of August, he and Fr McLaughlin, who joined him in Manila, visited five Dioceses in Philippines and three in Taiwan which had seemed to meet our criteria and where

we were assured of a welcome by the local church.

They underlined our position with the various Bishops:

"We come as missionaries with a vision of evangelization and of helping the local church itself to be more missionary. Our option is to be with the poor and those on the margin, to meet people in society beyond the borders of the established Church, to share our faith with people of other religions and cultures. Initially, this could be from a parish base, as we are new in the country and new to its culture. A parish could provide a rich inculturation experience. However, we are not coming to "plug gaps". We want, again probably after a period of adaptation, to be available to the local church for more specialised ministries e.g. youth, justice, formation at all levels, minorities,

interreligious dialogue etc. Community is an essential part of our lifestyle. We also emphasise teamwork and want to collaborate closely with others".

They felt these points were understood and well accepted by the diocesan authorities. They were brought on visits to specific places in line with our charism and much discussion took place about the possible involvement of our confreres in a variety of specific ministries.

On September 01, Fr Schouver continued on to visit our confreres in Pakistan and to reflect with them on the new initiative.

(SRAC 1991)

3. Echoes of the Visits

There is a search to-day for common

ground between the great world religions

in order to find strength in mutual agree-

ment, so as to face together the great

threats to humanity and therefore,

by implication to the dignity of God's creation

and people: nuclear warfare, racism, de-

struction of the ecology

If we Spiritans are not involved in

inter-faith dialogue where it is happening

most vitally, we shut ourselves in, away

from this world-shaping process

A. VIETNAM

t is a poor country, whose people have suffered much over the centuries, but particularly since 1954. Its needs, material and pastoral, are great. Apart from these needs, it could be a base also for future evangelization in Asia. Inculturation in other countries of Asia would be much easier for Vietnamese than for Africans, Europeans and Americans, North and South. Moreover, people from Vietnam in Europe and North America are already interested in the Congregation.

B. PHILIPPINES

The decision to include the Philippines in the first visit done by Fr McLaughlin followed a rethinking of an earlier one to omit it. The reasons for the doubts surrounding it were the large number of Catholics there already - around 80% of the population - the impression that it has a well-

established Church with a serious effort being made to implement the vision of the second "Pastoral Council of the Philippines" of 1990, and the fact that the local Church is already sending missionaries abroad. Also, the only "World Religion", other than Christianity, to be found there is Islam, with 5% of the population.

Against these were placed the ideas that, as newcomers to that part of the world, it would be an "easier" place to start, given the Catholic ambience. It would be a good place to get a "feel" of Asia and to give support to confreres working in a non-Christian environment in other Asian countries. Notwithstanding the fact that the country is regarded as being a catholic country, there is a huge need to deepen the faith of the Catholics in practically all areas. Despite the structures and pastoral plans, very many people would fall into the category of those who have "scarcely heard" the gospel message.

However, precisely because it is the only "Catholic" country in Asia, it would be a place where we might attract

missionary vocations for work outside the country, whether as members of the Congregation or not. There are some six million Filipinos, nearly 10% of the total population, already working, mostly on a temporary, but some on a permanent basis, outside the country. There are large numbers in other Asian countries - e.g. Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia. A Jesuit in Hong Kong remarked, in the context of the number of Filipinos who travel abroad: "It is not an accident that the Philippines is the only Catholic country in Asia. The Filipinos are 'ready-made' missionaries'." Congregations consulted spoke about special needs - e.g. ecology, justice, first evangelization among the cultural minorities, migrants, dialogue with Islam. Further, there were certain Bishops seeking missionaries because of

PHILIPPINES 120°E

the shortage of priests. In certain areas the ratio of priests to people is 1 to 18,000 Catholics.

About the possibilities of African confreres working in Asia, the CICM (Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae) took the initiative of appointing African members to the Philippines. Zairian members of the CICM have settled well there and they are very much appreciated.

By and large these impressions were confirmed during the first visit. Pressing invitations were made by 5 Bishops - 2 in the major southern island of Mindanao, where the Muslim minority live, and 3 in the north of the country, where many of the Tribal peoples live.

i. Visit of IPIL

In the Philippines the first place visited by the Superior General and Fr McLaughlin was the

Prelature of Ipil, situated in the civil province of Zamboanga del Sur in the south-western part of the island of Mindanao.

The major problems in the area are:

- economic poverty and unemployment due to very low prices of farm products;
- high mortality rate and lack of health services for the poor in the outstations;
- bad roads, expensive public transportation, lack of water system in towns and outstations;
- · low standard of public education;

 disturbed peace and order situations, due to tensions between Muslims and the Government and Catholics as Muslims seek independence for all or sections of Mindanao.

ii Visit of ILIGAN

125 E

Batan Is

The diocese of Iligan lies north-west of Ipil. Frs Schouver and McLaughlin arrived, after 6 hours of very bumpy travel, covered with light brown dust! The journey confirmed the problem of "bad roads and public transport".

The Columban Missionaries were formerly, responsible for

this and the neighbouring dioceses. Some twenty years ago a section of Iligan was cut off and set up as the Vicariate of Marawi. In Marawi the population is 95% Muslim, which calls for a very sensitive approach by the Catholic missionaries. All the sisters of a Carmelite convent there, were kidnapped some years ago, as was a MEP priest on two occasions. Two attempts have been made to kidnap the present Bishop. While there, during the first visit, Fr McLaughlin had to stay indoors, keeping his European features well out of sight!

20° N Babuyan Is PACIFIC OCEAN Luzon SOUTH 15°N MANILA QUEZOn City CHINA Catanduanes SEA HILDPPINES а 10'N S ULU SEA Zamboanga Mt Apo Davac Basilan Mindanao 5°N 400 200 Miles 0

iii. Visit of MANILA

From Iligan the visitors made a journey of an hour and a half to the airport at Cagayan de Oro, from where they flew to Manila. There they enjoyed the hospitality of the CICM community. The two dioceses and vicariate

they were to visit in the northern part of the island of Luzon were part of the area traditionally evangelized by this Congregation.

iv. Visit of BAYOMBONG

Six hours by bus from Manila, this time on much better roads brought them to Bayombong. The diocese is ringed by mountains in all directions. It is a melting pot of different cultures. There is a specific outreach to the Tribal people, under the responsibility of a female religious congregation, founded specifically for this mission and itself made up of Tribal members. Four places were visited, two of them very much on the periphery of the diocese. One



Bayombong, the Philippines: In school at Castañeda.

L-R: Fr General, Florence, Catechist, School Worker,
Fr Edwin, School Worker, Lay Member, Fr Brian.

was a very attractive area in the mountains, some four hours by car from Bayombong. Of its ten outstations, seven are accessible only on foot. At the moment it is looked after by a very competent twenty two years old catechist who is there on mission from the provincial capital, Tuguergarao.

v. Visit of ILAGAN

It takes three hours by public transport to go from Bayombong to Ilagan. The diocese covers a very large area - 10,665 km2 - and has a population of over a million. In contrast with its neighbours, it is very flat. However, there is an area with some 20,000 people on the Pacific side of its one mountain range, the "Sierra Madre" and which is accessible only by plane or a very roundabout route by bus and boat. Various people pointed to this as offering the greatest missionary challenge. However, overall it was not considered a good place to start because, as newcomers, we would need to be nearer the centre of the diocese initially. The Bishop was very flexible about where we might begin if we went there.

vi. Visit of TABUK

The seat of the Vicariate of Tabuk was a further two hours on. This was erected as an independent ecclesiastical entity in 1992 with the appointment of a dynamic Bishop, Mgr Carlito Cenzon, CICM, a Filipino who formerly worked in Brazil. It is extremely mountainous and very many of the villages in the southern part can be reached only on foot. It is made up, almost entirely, of members of the Apayao and Kalinga Tribes. One of the major issues is war between different villages. The notion of vendetta is very much a feature of the Kalinga culture. Elaborate, but precarious, peace pacts are in place. While they were there, the Bishop had to be "at the ready" during a whole day, waiting to be called to continue his role as a mediator between two groups at war with each other. Again, the Bishop here

showed himself very open to work out the details of their mission with a team who might go there.

vii. Back in MANILA

Tabuk is ninety minutes drive from Tuguergarao, where they took the plane back to Manila. They met Cardinal Sin who, somewhat surprisingly, immediately took the initiative and strongly encouraged the Spiritans to come there with a view to founding the Congregation and preparing missionaries for China

C. TAIWAN

The challenges of Taiwan are quite different. It has a very small Catholic group. Catholics numbered some 15,000 up to 1949. Then with the influx of people and missionaries from the Mainland, there was a growth up to some 300,000 over the last twenty years, principally among the recent immigrants and the Aborigines. This remains the number today in a population of some 21.400.000. The "Taiwanese", or those who trace their origins to the Chinese who came to the island from the 10th to the 12th century, constitute over 80% of the population but less than one third of the Catholics. Thus, many would say that the Church has never really inculturated. The Church and society, tend to be very hierarchical and so the formation of an active, involved, outward-looking laity remains a task to be done. This was underlined by the three bishops who invited us to work in their Dioceses. The Catholic Church is responsible for the running of many Institutions - e.g. kindergartens, centres for the handicapped and aged, hospitals, etc. schools, orphanages or centres for children from broken homes

There are good reasons to claim that the economic development of the country has not satisfied all the aspirations of the people. This is confirmed by the revival of Buddhism and the widespread involvement in Popular Religion. There seems to be an increasing search for "meaning" in life beyond that which an upwardly mobile society provides. Similarly, the economic growth has left some people and groups more on the margin - e.g. Aborigines, migrant workers, aged, handicapped etc. The basic challenge, like that increasingly of modern Europe and the U.S., is how to evangelise this society - what witness do we present to it, how can Christian values find roots in it?

Contact with youth presents a special problem. There is great competition to get into the "better" Universities and courses. Thus, very many young people go to "cram schools" at night in order to supplement what they have already learned during the day at normal school and to better prepare them for examinations. Their lives become almost totally absorbed with study and school-related activities.

On the other hand, Taiwan also, offers real possibilities of inter-religious dialogue. Given the origins of 98% of the population, it is a very "Chinese" society. While we would go there for the purpose of mission on the spot, it would also provide an immersion in Chinese culture and language which would be relevant to any possible, future presence on the Mainland. Mandarin and the local Taiwanese languages present a very significant challenge. To learn the basics of either takes two years of full-time study!

i..Visit of KAOHSIUNG

On August 23 the Superior General and Fr. McLaughlin flew to Kaohsiung in the South of Taiwan. This is the second largest city in the country: 1.5 million people, of the 3.5 millions of the area covered by the Diocese, live there. One third of the area, mainly in the mountain section, is inhabited by Aborigines, who also constitute about

1/3 of the 46,700 Catholics in the Diocese.

They visited various areas of the Diocese, including the large Buddhist Monastery of Fokuangshan or "Buddha's Light Mountain". This is typical of the revival of Buddhism. In its 30 years of existence it has opened some 120 centres worldwide. In the monastery itself there are 900 nuns and 400 monks.

Another interesting visit was to the Church at Wanchin, built in 1865 and the second oldest in the country. The possibilities presented to us by Archbishop

Shan, S.J, who is also President of the Bishops' Conference, were first evangelization in the south-east, the urban apostolate as new areas open up in Kaohsiung itself or working out of established parishes.

ii. Visit of HSINCHU

From Kaohsiung they travelled on by train to Hsinchu which is near the coast in the north-west of the country. The four hour trip gave them a chance to note the very high population density in the country. 64% of the country's 36,000 km2 is under forest-covered mountains, with summits of up to 4,000 metres. This runs like a spine almost the complete length of the country. It divides unequally the country with 19.5 millions on the western side, along which the train travelled, and 1.9 millions on the eastern side. The impression they got from the journey, was almost like going through one continuous city. During

the visits within Hsinchu Diocese they had the opportunity to go to this very beautiful mountainous area and see something of the pastoral work of an Italian Franciscan with the 8,000 Aborigines in the parish.

iii. Visit of TAIPEI

The final stop was the Archdiocese of Taipei, which is just an hour by train from Hsinchu. The Archbishop showed himself to be very flexible about where we might work and underlined the importance of bringing something new to the church and not just maintaining the *status quo*.

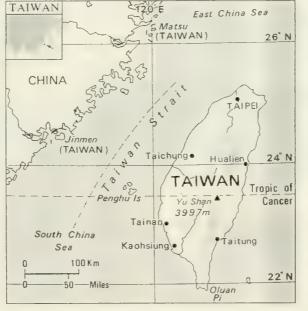
At the Pastoral Centre they met a laywoman with a degree in Theology, who with another laywoman and a sister travels around the country, giving renewal courses to groups of clergy, religious and laity. She believes the principal task of a new missionary group would also be to bring a new sense of openness to a church which is closed in on itself

and very traditional.

One of the highlights of the visit was a day and a half spent with Fr. Albert Poulet-Mathis, S.J., former Secretary of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference on inter-religious dialogue and a member of the Pontifical Commission. Currently, he is President of the Taiwan Conference on Religion and Peace. With him they visited a Centre of Buddhist Studies, where some very profound inter-religious research is going on, and two Buddhist Monasteries. The second of these was on a hilltop overlooking the sea. The Master, who is also the

Founder of the monastery, is an exceptional person and they had the opportunity of some faithsharing with him and some of the 80 member community.

Two interesting developments of this monastery are that, impressed by the example of catholic religious, they are becoming more involved in social activities and secondly, there is a project to build a "Museum of World Religions" close to the monastery. Finally, they went to a Centre of "Popular Religion" in the centre of Taipei. It is estimated that between seventy and eighty per cent of Taiwanese participate, at one time or another, in these rites. Fr. Albert is very convinced about the opportunities, and need, for inter-religious dialogue. He does not see it as an exercise alongside others, but as fundamental in today's world. He is convinced that Catholics have much to learn from Buddhism, as he himself has in his forty years of encounter with it.



C. Discernment and Decision

1. Redefining Our Criteria

ollowing on the two visits, the Council felt that sufficient research had been done and that it was time to make a careful discernment towards taking decisions. We tried to redefine the criteria for the selection of the places where we should start. In doing this

- We looked first of all at the Spiritan Rule of Life, especially the articles of Chapter 2;
- We took account of what we heard from all those, individuals and institutes, which were contacted during the research period to give information about Asia and their experiences there;
- We reviewed our initial criteria;
- Considered the results of the first journey by Fr McLaughlin and the second one of the Superior General together with Fr. McLaughlin;
- The significant guidelines which had come up in discussions of the project over the last year.

Then the General Council arrived at the following criteria for choosing between different possibilities.

- 1. While going to any place will be an enrichment for us, we are not going to "plug gaps". There must be real needs in each of the places and in the spirit of SRL 12, we give preference to:
- first evangelization or some specific/specialised service to the local church or society, or a parish situation, at least initially, as long as it permits the possibility of other outreaches;
- those oppressed and most disadvantaged, as a group or as individuals: "we must make ourselves the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them (SRL 14)";
- where we can help to make the local church more missionary and self-evangelising
- 2. There is the possibility in collaboration with the Local Church, of contributing something significant to it, as summarised in SRL 18 and 18.1.

- 2.1. Fostering Christian communities, educating and training responsible laity;
- 2.2. Vocations' ministry; training for ministries and for missionary and religious life;
- 2.3. Social and educational work;
- 2.4. Conscientisation re justice and reconciliation between people;
- 2.5. Youth;
- 2.6. The poor and marginalized, notably refugees and immigrants, underprivileged.
- 3 In certain circumstances our presence is witness and service in the name of the gospel for the Kingdom (SRL 15.3).
- 4. Contact and encounter with Asian cultures and the great world religions.
- 5 The possibility of awakening missionary vocations. While we are not going to Asia specifically to find vocations, this objective is not to be excluded in the context of our presence and development there.
- The importance and possibility of community life and teamwork. If four confreres living together were not possible, then two communities of two in close proximity would be guaranteed.
- 7. The acceptance of our African confreres in the centres of population, considering the fact that the Congregation will depend very much on them for personnel in the next fifteen years. The positive experience of some African CICM in some of the countries visited shows that there would be good acceptance by the catholic community. They have done exceptionally well at the language.
- **8.** The leadership and pastoral approach or planning of the diocese.
- 9. The financial implications.

Archbishop Shan spoke about a group of 13 different religions which meets every two months. Already there are some signs of mutual influence - e.g. the new social outreaches of Buddhists monasteries and the projected museum of world religions near the Ling Chiu Shan Wu-sheng Monastery. There seem to be real possibilities of encounter with Buddhism, Taoism and popular religion.

2. Decisions

A fter due reflection and discernment based on the above criteria, the Council felt that it was time to take the following decisions:

- 1. We will take new initiatives in Asia.
 - a) An initial team (group) of four will be assigned to the Philippines to work in the diocese of Iligan.
 - b) A presence in Manila, Philippines, is envisaged for a later stage.
 - c) An initial team (group) of four will be assigned to Taiwan to work in the diocese of Hsinchu.
 - d) A process for the selection of personnel is being set up.
 - e) We continue to seek ways of having a presence in Vietnam in the future especially through educational and development projects.
- 2. We encourage confreres, who are willing and have the

- required aptitudes, to become involved as teachers in Continental China.
- 3. We will strive to establish a network of confreres and groups of circumscriptions who have a particular interest or involvement in mission in the Orient. Through this network, we can disseminate information, reflections and proposals.
- **4**. Fr. B. Kelly was appointed as the Correspondent for Asia within the General Council. Part of his brief will be to coordinate the above network.
- 5. Concrete steps were decided on in order to inform all confreres, and especially Superiors and those in Formation, as fully as possible, about these new initiatives.
- **6.** An overall financial plan, particularly regarding the expenses for the immediate years, will be drawn up.

We have kept along the way of Providence up to now. Providence alone has guided us. I have never been able to put any plan into execution that I dreamt up myself, while I have always brought to execution as if my magic, in the midst of crosses and sufferings it is true, everything which came our way providentially. (N.D. XII, 199, 1850)

3. Detailed Description of the Choices

a. ILIGAN in the Philippines

here are 660,000 people in the area covered by the Diocese with just over 250,000 in the City and its immediate surrounds. This last is export-driven, with a good port and large factories - e.g. cement, vinyl, coconut, steel. However, it has not developed as quickly over the last fifteen years as neighbouring Cagayan de Oro.

A total of 16,000 third-level students in five nondenominational Institutes and one denominational, live in the city. One of the apostolates is to these students and there is a good "Catholic Centre Campus Ministry", presently being coordinated by a French MEP priest.

The city itself increasingly faces the problems of most large urban centres - e.g. new poor, migrant workers, street children, drugs, gambling, prostitution.

There are 18 parishes. The majority are along the coast in a valley between the mountains and the sea. But, there are



Chapel at Digkilaan, Iligan Diocese: L-R: Fr Nazar, Minister of Cult, Fr General, Barangay and Church President.

many communities/chapels also in the mountains - e.g. the majority of the seventy two attached to the parish of San Roque. Parishes normally have an elementary school attached. However, due to tensions with Muslims, three of these have had to close down. While Catholics constitute 78% of the overall population, the percentage of Muslims in some parts could be up to 40%, but is considered to be 20% overall.

There are 7 female religious congregations and 4 male - Columbans 4 members, Sacred Heart 2, MEP 1, Redemptorist 2. The current ratio of priests to Catholics is around 1 to 23,000.



View from the Chapel itself, Digkilaan.

The Bishop is new, having been Auxiliary in Cebu. So far, he has not taken many initiatives, but is trying to get the feel of the place. The diocese is lacking an updated pastoral plan, as the last one was drawn up in 1988, but a new one is among the priorities of the Bishop. A well thoughtout and participative process towards establishing this will begin in December.

The Diocese offers the possibility of a varied and challenging ministry. The more specific needs outlined by the people met in the diocese were: evangelization, accompanying basic communities, formation of laity and leaders, youth, dialogue - particularly with Muslims - outreach to the small number of tribal groupings, urban apostolate, support for the local clergy, assistance in the Seminary, especially spiritual direction.

As the possibility of founding the Congregation remains part of the motivation in going to the Philippines, contact with youth - who are normally to be found in greater numbers in urban and semi-urban areas - is an important criterion in the choice of location.

Our possible coming had been discussed with the clergy. We would be very welcome. Two specific options were suggested. The first would be an area presently made up of 3 parishes, called Lala, Lanipao and Salvador, where we would have a team of four living and working together. Lala is some ninety minutes by car from Iligan but will be quicker in the future as road improvements continue.

The area outlined has approximately 18,000 Catholics divided into some fifty eight smaller units or "chapels". The Muslim presence in parts is up to 50%. The people are a mixture of urban, farmers and fisherfolk.

The second would combine two commitments: one among people in the mountains, and one in the nearby city of Iligan. It would mean dividing the group into two smaller ones of two each, which would meet together each week for a day. One group would base itself at Digkilaan, which is an hour from Iligan, and in the mountains. The idea would be to start a new pastoral area made up of some thirty small centres, currently part of two neighbouring parishes, which have had very little attention over the years.

At present the terrain is quite difficult, with public transport to Iligan three times a day. Most of the people are tenants and poor. There is no electricity in the area as yet. However, it is likely that it will develop in the near future given that a new asphalted road to the capital of the neighbouring province is projected and will pass through Digkilaan. The second group would base itself in Iligan city and, probably, become immediately involved in more specialised ministries. The General Council prefers the second option and has communicated this fact to the Bishop.

b. HSINCHU in TAIWAN

The population of the area covered by the Diocese is 2.4 millions. It consists of three major urban centres, Hsinchu with 400,000, Maioli with 100,000 and Taoyuan, which is, effectively, part of greater Taipei. The Diocese also stretches eastward from these cities towards the mountains where some parishes are made up entirely of Aborigines. There is, however, a tendency for these peoples to move towards the urban centres in search of employment and education.

In Hsinchu city there are various industries and, hence, immigrant workers. It has five third level educational institutes with a Buddhist University projected. Miaoli also has industries but only one technical college. It is not growing as a city. Taoyuan attracts many workers, both from Taiwan itself and from overseas.

The Catholic population is 50,700, scattered around 82 parishes. Some of these have a very small weekly attendance - e.g. 6 - 10 people. Eight male missionary or religious congregations are present. As is the tradition in the country, many institutions are under the responsibility of the Diocese. Included in these are four centres for migrant workers and three student hostels. The Diocese has a number of pastoral centres, one of which is the



Lung Chiu Shan Wu Sheng Monastery with Venerable Dhama Master Hsin-Tao Shih with monks, nuns, Fr General and Fr Brian McLaughlin.

"Chinese Catholic Pastoral Centre" which provides a twoyear residential training course in pastoral catechetics.

Some of the pastoral challenges have a familiar ring for those experienced in missionary work in developed countries: formation of an active outward-looking laity; responding to a spiritual hunger in an atmosphere of materialism; helping young people, especially in dealing with the heavy pressure of study as the only way to succeed. Other pastoral challenges may be less familiar, such as that of inter-religious dialogue. All of them become dramatically unfamiliar because they are in Taiwan, where one decisively enters the ambit of the Chinese world.

We will be expected to make a contribution to a society with few committed Christians and our presence will be like that of a mustard seed. This is an experience which could prove to be very useful in the long term in view of similar ministry in the Northern hemisphere and in Africa.

The Bishop and Vicar General were very flexible about where we might work. The conclusion we arrived at was a preference for either the cities of Hsinchu or Taoyuan, but that the final decision would be left to the team itself, after it has had time to evaluate the situation during the language course.

4. Profiles

B ased on our reflections on the type of mission and the challenges involved in the new initiative, the General Council has prepared a missionary profile for the members of each of the missions. This has been sent to the Superiors.

At this point there seem to be certain qualities and skills which, if included in the team as a whole, would considerably benefit the initiatives. Not every member need have all these but they might be a goal for initial and on-going formation. An integral part of our method will be language

learning and on-going serious effort at personal inculturation and the inculturation of the Gospel.

Thus certain proficiency for language learning and a humble and open disposition to learn and receive people of other cultures will be indispensable. Interest and openness to inter-religious dialogue, capability of living in an international community and working as a team with others will be necessary. Almost certainly, the teams themselves will, after some time in the concrete situations, be able to focus more clearly on what is most useful.

D. Continuing Openness to Asia

The above decisions underline that we think that, as a Congregation, we are being called by the Holy Spirit to become more involved in Asia. The basic

impulse comes from the decision of Itaici which was greatly influenced by the presentations of our confreres in Pakistan and of the Foundation of the Indian Ocean.

Each of the new ventures has been chosen on its own merits. While it may result in the foundation of the Congregation there, our going to the Philippines is not primarily for this reason. Hence, while Cardinal Sin's invitation to begin in Manila is attractive, we felt that a beginning in a more rural setting might ultimately be more advantageous and in keeping with our Spiritan tradition.

Usually, we like to get to know the background and tradition of people through working and living with them before we start on a vocation apostolate. Our primary aim for going to the Philippines is for what we hope to receive from, and give to, the Filipino culture and Church Similarly, our experience in Taiwan will be helpful if there is a future opening in China, but we are not going there to "China watch" or use it as a springboard.

We have chosen to start the new initiative in the two countries instead of one because, given the differences between the two new missions in terms of reality and pastoral challenges, they are complementary and represent joint poles of an overall approach. Eventually, we would very much like also to start in Vietnam and possibly China which will, again, represent another reality.

We have already, explicitly or implicitly, described our style and hopes for our mission in Asia. Each place, Pakistan and the two new initiatives there, present different challenges and offer different possibilities. Thus our growing mission in Asia will be a very varied one.

E. Challenges

By now, you are probably acutely aware of "challenges"! However, we would like to underline three which seem particularly important to us.

- 1. These new initiatives urge us to rethink the values and attitudes which orientate our mission today. The Superior General has already elaborated on this in his Christmas letter.
- 2. The new initiatives demand real solidarity within the Congregation. The General Council believes that it has honestly tried to follow up the decision of Itaici to "consider another initiative in Asia". Following our research, we are convinced we should expand there. But, the lifeblood of the project will be personnel. Here, we are aware of our limitations. We would like to stress the importance of the Asian initiatives for the whole Congregation at this point in our history. As "new

initiatives" we would appeal for their sincere consideration by individual confreres and superiors.

Solidarity with the project will also, almost certainly, involve finances. We have set up a special current account for missionary projects, especially those which may need a financial injection to get going e.g. our most recent initiative in Mozambique. Obviously, this current account will need continual topping up.

3. Finally, our special relationship with Africa should mark this new venture. The future of the project depends greatly on the response of our African confreres. Without their commitment we will not be able to sustain it. As was mentioned by Bishops and others many times during the visitations, their going to Asia will offer the possibility of a very rich intercultural dialogue. They will also present to Asia the challenge that Africa is for our world today.

"Our leaving Pondicherry was an event of considerable importance for that small country. The local administration, as well as the children and their families, were united in their expression of appreciation and regret. The governor, Mr Manes, had entrusted to us the education of his youngest son. He insisted on presiding at the prize-giving ceremony. It was a simple celebration, without any official address or singing. He told the assembled group which was larger than usual, that he felt the need deeply to <express on behalf of the administration, on behalf of the families and on his own behalf, the highest appreciation and heartfelt regrets to the distinguished teachers which the colony was going to lose>".

On July 18, our students, their parents and many of the most important citizens of the town, accompanied us as far as the port. After many trials we were leaving the country, carrying with us the esteem and the love of everyone." (Gen. Bul., July 1887)



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GENERAL COUNCIL

MAY 1997

"THE SPIRIT BLOWS WHERE IT WILLS"

300 YEARS OF SPIRITAN LIFE

e are fast approaching three important anniversaries in the history of our Spiritan family: February 02, 2002, the 150th anniversary of the death of Francis Libermann; April 12, 2002¹, the second centenary of his birth in Saverne; May 27, 2003 the third centenary of the founding of the Congregation.

We will celebrate these anniversaries not because we want to establish how venerable we are as a Congregation, but to recall a missionary movement that has lasted 300 years because it has been loved by God and urged forward by his Spirit. At certain moments, it may have seemed becalmed, but against expectations, it moved again. The Spirit had only paused for breath! It is this breath of the Spirit, yesterday, today and tomorrow, that we want to celebrate as we turn our attention to these anniversaries.

Let us begin by looking back at previous centenaries, tracing the guidance of our family by the Spirit, seeing how often he brought good out of evil, success out of apparent failure, joy out of sorrow and despair...

A: ANNIVERSARIES IN OUR STORY

May 27, 1703

"M. Claude François Poullart des Places, on the

earliest register of our archives. After celeb-

Feast of Pentecost, 1703, then only an aspirant to the ecclesiastical state, began the establishment of the Community and Seminary of the Holy Spirit, under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin conceived without sin"²

Claude S. Den Slavery

rating the feast of Pentecost at the church of St. Etienne des-Grès, Claude and his dozen friends consecrated themselves in the chapel of Our Lady to bring the Gospel to the poor, then went home to their

Such is the birth certi-

ficate of our Congregation, as stated in the rented house in the rue Des Cordiers.

May 27, 1803

hundred years later - what should have been the first centenary. Much had been accomplished. Hundreds of priests who had been trained in the Holy Ghost Seminary were working throughout the world: in North America, China, Cambodia, Vietnam, Siam and India, as well as the French colonies. And in 1779, the first two Spiritans landed in Senegal, Africa. The reputation of these men was of the highest, thanks to the in-depth spiritual and academic training they received, in contrast to most of the contemporary clergy.

But there would be no celebrations for the first centenary, because there was no Congregation: it had been dissolved in 1792 in the wake of the French Revolution, its possessions confiscated, its students dispersed. The members of the Society were scattered; some were in Switzerland, others in Italy, England and the United States; some stayed in hiding

in France, even in the area around rue des Postes (the present *Rue Lhomond*). Only one³ had followed the path of compromise by taking the schismatic oath imposed on the clergy by the Revolutionary Government. Many had been imprisoned or exiled.

But there was a glimmer of hope. Napoleon, for his own good reasons, was being a little more accommodating towards the Catholic Church in France. Père Jacques Bertout had returned from England and was trying to contact the scattered members and making tentative steps to recover some of their property. He was able to regain possession of the Motherhouse and re-open the seminary which would provide hundreds more priests for service in the old French Colonies. Yet unbeknown to the Spiritans at that time, the greatest hope of all lay in a one-year-old child in Saverne, the son of the local rabbi.

May 27, 1903

Another centenary. The merger of Libermann's Congregation with the Spiritans had resulted in a flourishing and expanding missionary family that was now playing a central role in the missionary life of the Church. There were 1,400 members and several new Provinces were being developed in Europe and north America. But just as in 1803,

another grave crisis was threatening the very heart of the Congregation. By a decree of February 24, 1901, the Supreme Council of State in France had decided that the Congregation of the Holy Spirit ceased to exist in 1848 when it had been absorbed into

the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary. As the latter was an illegal religious congregation, according to the government's new categories, the Superior General, Mgr. Le Roy, had been told to send all the members back to their dioceses of origin where they could work as secular priests⁴.

Le Roy did not know where to turn. He had kept the impending disaster from his confreres and even the General Council did not know how desperate the situation really was. But he was blessed with a super-efficient General Secretary and Archivist, Père Désiré Barillec, known affectionately to his confreres as "the little white mouse" because of his ability to

sniff out any needed document from his voluminous files; he went rummaging amongst his papers and was finally able to prove, to the obvious disappointment of the French Government, that the exact opposite was the case. It was

the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary that had been suppressed in 1848; the present Congregation was the direct descendent of the foundation of Poullart des Places and thus enjoyed all the privileges of that missionary society, which included legal recognition by the Bourbon kings and Napoleon.

But the danger had not gone away. The new Prime Minister, Emile Combes, was even more anti-clerical than his predecessors and declared fifty four religious orders in the country to be illegal. They were told to leave their houses and disband. Even

though the Congregation of the Holy Spirit was now regarded as "authorised", its houses were not, apart from the Mother House in rue Lhomond. Dispersion and exile were again a

real possibility so property was being sought as a refuge in various countries, including England, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada and Holland, in case the worst should happen⁵.

So understandably, the centenary celebrations were very modest. Mgr. Le Roy, in a circular letter to the

Congregation, regretted that "the present circumstances do not allow us to celebrate this second centenary of our foundation with the joy and solemnity that we would otherwise have liked."
They had to be content with special prayers to be

recited at Benediction ("Te Deum" and " Sub tuum"), and a novena in the lead up to Pentecost. But he urged the confreres to take

_____ confr

Mgr Le Roy, 1903

courage from what had gone before:

"Our history, the history of these last 200 years,

should teach us never to despair...because God does not abandon those who remain worthy to serve him".

May 27, 2003

"Our history, the history of these last 200

years, should teach us never to dis-

pair...because God does not abandon

those who remain worthy to serve him".

We will be 300 years old. This time, with God's help, we are determined to celebrate in a fitting way, giving thanks to God for all he has done through us over three centuries and looking forward with renewed confidence to our future role in the missionary vocation of the Church.

Since the last centenary in 1903, the Congregation has played a major part in the extraordinary mission story of the Church. And looking around the Congregation today, we see so many signs of hope for the future that we cannot fail to be optimistic about our continuing role in mission, convinced that the Spirit is still calling us to new and exciting challenges.

In this century, the Congregation has become truly international. Today we work in 54 countries; our 3,109 members represent 51 different nationalities; of these, 692 are Africans from 24 different countries.

Colonial power has waned, the world is divided into zones of economic influence. Justice and peace issues have become central as the reign of God struggles to emerge through the reign of market forces.

Our mission has evolved. It remains the proclamation of the risen Christ, the one who hears the cry of the poor, but it has put on some fresh garments. It still takes the side of those who do not count, but there is a new emphasis on presence, on listening as a first step in a respectful dialogue. There is collaboration with other missionaries and with people of other faiths. There is a high appreciation of the ministry of lay people and a most welcome development in the area of lay associates.

Our organisation is changing to meet the new missionary challenges. Spiritan missionary teams are smaller, more international. There is a corresponding movement towards regional association of circumscriptions. Solidarity throughout the Congregation, both in finance and personnel, has become the way to survive.

Spiritan missionaries may work in northern cities or in southern savannahs. In a tough tropical climate, they may offer the strength and vigour of their youth; or from a nursing home, the sacrifice and suffering of their old age.

There is newness in the air; new foundations in Africa, new developments in Latin America, a new mission in Mozambique, a new initiative in Asia...and a new consciousness that it is when we are weak that we are strong.

B: PREPARATIONS

he strength of a tree is in its roots, unseen and largely forgotten. Each generation of Spiritans has to reflect on its identity, and there are special moments in time which are particularly apt for such stock-taking. Our anniversaries are surely such a moment. Throughout the Congregation, groups have been established in various circumscriptions to promote historical research, and some individuals have already published the fruits of their personal investigations. To help promote this reflection, the General Council has set up a commission, the International Group for History and

Anniversaries (GIHA)⁷ to encourage us in this reaching back into our Spiritan traditions.

The Commission began its work in November 1994 and has had two further meetings. Next September it will meet for two weeks at Chevilly. It has been asked

to organise a number of projects⁸ which will require the cooperation of confreres throughout the world:

1. An illustrated booklet (Album), aimed at the general public, which will describe the 300 year history of Spiritans in the service of Mission. If they so wish, circumscriptions will be able to add some pages dealing specifically with their own mission history. This Album will be completed by the autumn of 1997.

- 2. A diary, which will record each day the anniversaries of significant events for our Congregation and circumscriptions, and a short accompanying text from our Spiritan heritage. A sample will be submitted to the General Chapter in
- 3. A collection of significant texts which have influenced our Spiritan identity and motivated our missionary service. They could be seen as a rough draft for a future Spiritan Anthology. The texts will be published with a contextual commentary, and it

hoped is that samples will be available to present to the General Chapter.

4 A new biography of Francis Libermann.

5. To propose to the General Chapter other ideas to commemorate the anniversaries, both locally and

more useful in the Church". (Rule 1849; ND X, p 536, Art. 117)

"Although it will be their duty to strengthen

the Congregation internally and to extend its

works externally, they will beware of the desire

to exalt it. They will beware of the all

too natural desire to see it grow in numbers

and to see it grow in importance. They will

be content to put themselves at the disposition

of their Divine Master in peace and confidence

and to profit from the circumstances which

the providence of God will provide to make it

at the level of the Congregation.

Local celebrations

Another important role of the Group is to encourage circumscriptions, both old and new, to write their own histories and to draw up their programme for the local celebration of the anniversaries e.g. spiritual preparation, Spiritan retreats and pilgrimages, new commemorative pastoral projects, local exhibitions, meetings and colloquia etc.

C: THE CENTRAL ROLE OF ARCHIVES

A question of attitude

he crucial researches of Fr. Barillec quoted above are a dramatic illustration of the importance of archives and archivists. If we are aware of our history today, it is largely thanks to our predecessors who took care to record and preserve

what was happening - the great events as well as the Each community kept a daily journal, small. missionaries wrote up their trek books, letters were carefully filed away, personal documents of deceased confreres were kept as well as photographs recording the development of missions. They felt it was their duty to record these things for future generations of Spiritans.

Somehow today, we seem to have lost many of these excellent habits. Perhaps the ease of communication that we enjoy with each other has diverted our minds

from the duty of communicating with those who will come after us. Whatever the reasons, we are in danger of losing much of our history simply because of our failure to record and preserve. And this in a

period when so many new provinces, foundations and projects are coming to birth.

What does this mean in practice?

In the last thirty years, our Congregation has become very decentralised, with much of the authority and responsibility going to the individual circumscriptions. Archives are no exception. At the level of the Congregation itself, we have the General Archives at Chevilly, containing the material of the General Administrations from 1703 to 1962. The archives office in Rome has the task of preparing contemporary documents for eventual transfer to the General Archives in France. Both of these archives

come under the responsibility of the General Secretary and, ultimately, General Council. the Outside of that, each circumscription is responsible for the preservation and management of its own archives, and this involves everybody to a greater or lesser extent.

The first thing is to ensure that important documents are kept safely in conditions where they will not deteriorate. Preservation is the sine qua non: no preservation, no hives! What should be kept? Obviously, not

everything is of the same importance; common sense is the first guide. But remember that sometimes the importance of documents only becomes apparent with the passing of time. So if in doubt, keep them, or at least seek advice from others. They can always be thrown away later, but once they are in the dustbin, they are gone for ever!

A Journal should be kept by each community.

They are often of great Whatever the reasons, we are in danger interest to future reof losing much of our history simply searchers. because of our failure to record and informal and preserve. And this in a period when so commentary on events as they happen. A fitting many new provinces, foundations and and suitably detailed projects are coming to birth. obituary

> written for each deceased confrere. The standard of obituaries varies considerably from one circumscription to another. When properly done, they can be a rich historical source as well as a fitting record of the life and work of our departed brothers. The funeral homily, while often edifying, has a different purpose in mind and is no substitute for the formal obituary.

> Photographs are a particularly striking record of the past, but it is important to identify individuals appearing in them. People soon forget! Other types of illustration, such as maps, paintings, films etc. should also be carefully preserved.

> Each circumscription should collect and preserve the

basic Spiritan literature so that research can be done locally: e.g. the General Bulletin, Notes and Documents, Spiritan News. Information/Documentation etc.

giving

should

heartfelt

To oversee all the above, it is vital for each circumscription to have a designated archivist. The "Administrative Guide for Superiors of Circumscriptions" (1996) notes that "the archivist of every circumscription should henceforth be listed with the official functionaries in all directories" (4.4) At their meeting last June, the

Père Désiré Barillec CSSp, "The little white mouse"

European archivists expressed their willingness to help train those taking up archival work for the first time. A "Guide for Archivists" in the Congregation is being prepared and will be circulated later in the vear.

D: A LIVING, CHANGING CONGREGATION

Scientists tell us that the human body changes completely every seven years, yet we remain the same person and, apart from a few extra wrinkles, we look much the same. In a similar way, we are a very different Congregation to what we were 100 or even 50 years ago - our self image, our outlook, our methods of evangelisation, our theology of mission, our places of origin. Yet despite the differences, despite being a completely new generation of Spiritans, we are undoubtedly still the same family of Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann. This is because our history, both written and oral, is more than just a link with the past; it is at the very heart of our continuing identity.

But this continuity cannot be taken for granted; its quality will depend, amongst other things, on respect for our history, the way we love and preserve it, the way we understand the lessons from our past and apply them to present and future challenges. It is highly imprudent to take important decisions without a backward glance at those who preceded us. That is what the English writer, G.K. Chesterton, meant when he said:

"Tradition means giving the vote to the most obscure of all classes - our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking around!"

Henry Koren wrote in 1986 that "Among religious institutes, few have had so extraordinary a history as the Spiritans". But it is extraordinary not so much as just another piece of secular history, but rather as an illustration of what the Holy Spirit can accomplish through men of good will, despite their fragility and inadequacy, despite the obstacles and set-backs thrown up by the tide of history. Which is why we look forward to the next hundred years with excitement and confidence.

But when all is said and done, the best way to write our own Christian and Spiritan story is to live it to the full. The witness of our Spiritan lives in the service of the poor is by far the most important contribution we can make to the celebration and preservation of our Spiritan tradition. This living testimony is the assurance that we have truly heard the call to renewal in the spirit of our founders.

Dates to remember

February 2, 2002: 150th Anniversary of death of Fr Libermann.

April 12, 2002: 200th Anniversary of his birth in Saverne.

May 27, 2003: 3rd Centenary of the Foundation of the Congregation.

Notes

- 1. Until 1903, it was thought that Libermann was born in 1804, but further research at the Mairie of Saverne showed that he was in fact born at 9 a.m.on April 12, 1802
- 2. "Notes et Documents relatifs à l'histoire de la Congregation du Saint-Esprit", p 1: (1917), quoting the "Registre des Associés à la Communauté et Séminaire consacré au Saint-Esprit".
- 3. Père Moranville of Guyanne (1760-1824), who later retracted and died a saintly death, having laboured for many years in Baltimore. (cf Henry Koren: "A Spiritan Who was Who" p. 11).
- 4. A dramatic account of this crisis can be found in "Un Grand Missionaire Mgr Alexandre Le Roy" by Père Henri Goré CSSp, pp 151 185.
- 5. In the event, the Spiritans were not expelled from France, but several new Provinces were started as a direct result of the persecution.
- 6. Bulletin Général: May, 1903, p 128-129.
- 7. cf. "Spiritan News" no. 105, January-February, 1995.
- 8. cf "Spiritan News" no. 110, November 1995



INFORMATION DOCUMENTATION

C.S.Sp - Clivo di Cinna, 195 - 00136 Roma Italia

I/D 55

General Council

April 1998

DIFFERENT FACES OF THE SPIRITAN VOCATION

"Whatever may be the work we are engaged in as Priests or as Brothers, we aim to bear witness to a kingdom of justice and peace, by living together in community, in genuine charity, in mutual forbearance, pardoning, sharing, ever hospitable and free from prejudice".

"In our community, each and all are looked upon as confreres, received from the Lord...each one has gifts from which all draw benefit".

"In some places, those who are working with us wish to be associated with us. We welcome them with joy, inviting them to share our spirituality and our apostolic life". (SRL 24, 34, 24.3).



Brothers of the French Province in Gentinnes in 1993

Front Row: L-R: B. Le Roux (Vence), P. Villain (Chevilly), Ph. Erny (Neufgrange), H. Le Bourbasquet (Piré), A. Kervarec (Lille), M. Coffin (Neufgrange), J. Boussant (Saint Lô), X. Ziémé (Vence), L. Morvan (rue Lhomond), E. Denoual (Chevilly), A. Gimbert (rue Lhomond): kneeling: J. Cransveld (Gentinnes), D. Damour (Chevilly), M. Jacquet (Chevilly), B. Spitz (Bordeaux).

Back Row: L-R: J-M. Krall, (Chevilly), E. Jaouen (Langonnet), C. Bogen (Blotzheim), A. Daniel (rue Lhomond), M. Bochaton (Langonnet), D. Blot (Chevilly), J. Dubois (Langonnet), J. Godin (Chevilly) and G. Chauvin (Allex).

The General Chapter of Itaici in 1992 said that the vocation of a brother is "an essential vocation for

our mission". In 1995, Spiritan brothers were invited to describe the way they live out their vocation in the service of mission today. There

"It can therefore be said that a sense of mission is essential to every Institute, not only those dedicated to the active apostolic life, but also those dedicated to the contemplative life."

(Vita Consecrata: No. 72).

show what a large variety of different openings there are for those who want to join us, so we will add these to the brothers' replies.

The whole raises certain reflections and questions at which we will also look.

The requests for missionary personnel that come to us each year from the circumscriptions

were not very many replies: we will quote some of them in this paper, adding others of the same type.

I. BROTHERS - ONE WAY OF BEING A SPIRITAN

A: Brothers talk about their vocation A gift of oneself...

The spiritan Brother is a baptised person, who is called to give himself... The vocation of brother is different to the diaconate; it is tied to a call to religious life; the work of a Brother is



"The life of a Brother is within the Congregation even if it is at the service of the local Church"

Br Stephen Antwi Mensah teaching, Ejisu, Ghana.

within a Congregation, even if it is at the service of a local Church".

"I was thinking about missionary life...I looked around, trying to find what God wanted from me...I finally understood that the Lord was calling me to serve as a religious missionary, to bring the Good News to people by trying to relieve the sufferings of the poor...The life of the Brother is more action than word; it is through his professional competence that he witnesses to Jesus Christ".

"A Brother has his own way of living out his religious consecration. Besides fraternal life in community and the life of prayer, his specialisation is important for several reasons: it is a part of the identity of a Brother. It is a chance for self-expression, for putting to use the gifts we have received for the service of the mission. Moreover, through his work, the Brother contributes to the upkeep of his community".

In the service of the mission...

"The spiritan missionary spirit leads me to live amongst the poor in the bush, doing jobs which unfortunately nobody else wants to do (various health services). It helps me to be aware of various aspects of justice and peace when doing my job, and of a certain ecumenical dimension. I find myself listening to those who welcome me, who share their culture as well as their sufferings in a spirit of complete trust...".

"7 notice that the further I go, the more my work seems to be moving into the area of the apostolate. spent many years in charge of a workshop, with a few hours catechism on the side. Recently, 1



"One way of being Spiritan"
Br Paul Heinz, Germany, repairing a
windmill in South Africa.

am trying to help young boys and girls who are thinking of entering a postulancy or seminary..."

"At present I am a nurse specialising in tropical pathology. Being a nursing Brother means, first of all, meeting Jesus in the suffering faces of the sick. It also means being involved in the development of health care: teaching poor people to be no longer the victims of bad hygiene which is a constant threat in their lives, and helping them to look after their own health".

"My life as a Brother has led me to serve the mission by listening to people; I often had contacts with adults and children...by catechism and by welcoming them to the parish".



"I'm trying to help young boys who are thinking of entering the Seminary"

Br Paul Ronssin, Director of Foyer Jacques Laval, Valence, France.

A completely separate vocation...

Some Brothers refer to themselves as "consecrated laymen" or "lay Spiritans". Others insist on the fact that they are "religious, not laymen!" Most are perfectly happy to be called "Brother": "I am convinced that my vocation is a special call from God; I am proud to be called a Brother..."

It is surely a question of emphasis. Those who call themselves "Brother" are stressing the fact that they have received a personal vocation to the religious life and that their consecration unites them to all other religious. Those who prefer the term "layman" see themselves closer to the baptismal vocation which is shared by all Christians than to that of ordained ministers which would place them in the "clerical world".

No doubt all would recognise themselves as "religious missionaries" along with all other pro-

fessed Spiritans. Equally, they would see themselves responding to a completely separate vocation with its own special value for the service of the mission.

B: Who are they? What are they doing

A few statistics:

- * In October 1997, there were 272 Brothers in the Congregation out of a total of 3,080 members, i.e. a little less than 9%. Of these, 18 are in temporary vows i.e. 5% of the total number of confreres are in temporary vows.
- * 10% of Brothers are less than 40 years old; 22% between 40 and 60; 25% between 60 and 70; 43% over 70.
- * Ten Brothers have taken perpetual vows since January 1, 1990.

Young people in formation

In Francophone Central and West Africa, of those who have just finished their novitiate with the FAC, one Central-African is studying management, a Guinean is specialising in catechetics and audio-visual techniques, and a Cameroonian is training to be a nurse.

In the West African Foundation: a Brother in perpetual vows, who specialised in building, has just received his first appointment; three from Ghana in temporary vows are qualifying as carpenters, while another has just finished his training as a teacher.

In the Nigerian Province, four young confreres are training in woodwork, electricity, mechanics and secretarial work.

In the Indian Ocean Foundation: one Brother has just qualified as a nurse specialising in tropical pathology while another is training in teaching and catechetics.

Elsewhere, other young men are choosing this type of spiritan vocation.

Different types of service

Brothers have been using their skills for a very long time in many different activities in the areas of construction or material administration, both in mission areas and in Provinces of origin. They have taken part in the education of young people and in their professional and religious formation, including the formation of young Spiritans. It would be impossible to list the many services, often humble and hidden, that Brothers have provided until today in spiritan communities.

Sometimes they are working for the support of confreres and young people in formation, sometimes for the maintenance of properties, sometimes in administration. Some of these tasks have been shared with confreres who are priests or with lay people.

In recent years, Brothers have taken a more direct part in the apostolic life of communities, in works of education, health, catechetics, the media, rural and agricultural development... In communities, they have taken on the responsibility of Bursar and Superior.

Religious Brothers

"These Religious are called to be brothers of Christ, 'the first born among many brothers'; brothers to one another, in mutual love and working together in the Church in the same service of what is good; brothers to everyone, in their witness to Christ's love for all, especially the lowliest, the needlest; brothers for a greater brotherhood in the Church...

Religious Brothers are an effective reminder to Religious Priests of the fundamental dimension of brotherhood in Christ, to be lived among themselves and with every man and woman". (Vita Consecrata, No. 60).

II. THE WORLD DRAWS UP OUR AGENDA

 $E_{\rm priorities}^{\rm ach\ year,\ the\ General\ Council\ receives\ a\ list\ of}$ ing for additional help along with a brief descrip-

tion of the posts they are trying to fill, either with first appointments or with more experienced confreres.

With a few exceptions, it is not normally stated whether they are looking for priests or brothers. A closer examination of some of the recent re-

quests shows that a good number of them could just as easily be filled by Brothers. Here are some examples:

Witnessing to the Gospel

In situations of first evangelisation, much of the work consists in giving a living witness to the

"The life of a Brother is more action than word" Br Joseph Mbah, building the Noviciate, Nigeria.

News. Good making "neighbours" of the most abandoned and neglected groups or individuals, those who are undergoing all kinds of trials. It can take the form of practical initiatives to improve the quality of life in different health, areas: provision drinking water,

agricultural development, support for employment schemes etc. This type of request is coming from every direction: Latin America, Africa, Asia. In certain contexts, first evangelisation can mean a daily religious dialogue that takes place through helping to find solutions to the most worrying human concerns. This is particularly the case in those parts where we are working in significantly or dominantly Moslem societies.

Working for justice and reconciliation

Many circumscriptions ask for help with developing initiatives to defend the rights of the weakest

and those excluded from society: social, ethnic or religious minorities. This is clearly the case, for example, in Pakistan (Marwari), Cameroon (Pygmies), Paraguay and Mexico (Ame-rindians).

Sometimes, this concern for the weakest brings us to minister to immigrants (North America and Europe) or to come to the aid of-

refugees, particularly in East and West Africa.

Working with young people

Many requests are seeking help with educational projects, both general and technical, as well as youth movements and chaplaincy work with students. We get such applications particularly from Africa, but also from Europe and North America.

Sometimes it concerns an informal type of education for neglected young people who no longer have any family support. We have such examples in Central Africa and Madagascar.

Works of formation

It is particularly the young Churches that ask our help for Christian formation for all ages in parishes or basic communities: for example, catechetics, reflections regarding the inculturation of

> the Gospel, vocations work. Some requests are for training in the use of the media.

> Nearly all the new Foundations and many of the young Provinces, are asking for formators for spiritan candidates. As well as the usual aptitudes needed for living in a formation sit-

uation, other more specific skills are men-

tioned: management, agriculture, development.

As well as these specific requests, there are other equally pressing needs which are not normally catered for by first appointments. For example, many requirements are connected with the "internal" life of communities or circumscriptions, for which brothers are sought as well as priests or lay people.

In the world of today, these are the tasks, amongst others, that religious should undertake:

- * Preference for the poor,
- * Care of the sick,
- * Presence in the world of education and
- * culture.
- * Presence in the world of social
- * communications,
- * Be at the service of Christian unity,
- * Inter-religious dialogue...dialogue of life, dialogue of works. (Vita Consect., Nos. 82, 83, 96, 102).

III. WHAT IS THE SPIRIT SAYING TO US

The Spirit is the driving force behind all mission. It is he who speaks to people in their hearts, asking them to give their life for the Kingdom and each must give his or her personal response. But it is partly our responsibility to help people who come to us to understand this call and to articulate their reply. This raises several questions for us:

A: Is our vision of mission wide enough

What does it mean, to "announce the Gospel"? Certainly the specific preaching of the Word of

God is an essential element of any concept of mission. But perhaps we are too circumscribed by the idea of "Gospel" as exclusively concerned with words or a text. Are there not many other kinds of evangelisation? When we practise works of charity in the Spirit of Christ, or work for justice or the integral development of people, are we not also announcing the Good News of the love of God for all these people by making them aware of his respectful and supportive presence?

Mission consists of both a gift and a call to conversion. If we are too obsessed by the idea of

visible results, mission can become something impatient, pressurising people with those requirements that are deemed necessary to hasten the building of the Kingdom; when that is so, we can easily lose sight of the free nature of the gift of God.



"The Spiritan Missionary Spirit leads me to live amongst the poor".

Br Maixent Kouka, a Congolese working in Angola, has launched a vast programme in mechanics, tailoring, electronics, farming, carpentry, and gardening for youth aged from 12 to 20 years.

Is our way of living mission sufficiently "disinterested" and respectful of a person's freedom? Do we allow enough time for the Word to germinate? Is our approach patient, tactful, "fraternal"? Are we really aware of this dimension of the Good News and its significance for the people of today?

B. Are the calls correctly understood

Several confreres are asking themselves questions:

"There are certainly young people today who want to work for mission without becoming priests. One only has to look at the number of 'Coopérants' working with us. The Congregation should welcome these young people and try to make room for the different forms of membership which they are seeking. Perhaps we see ourselves too much in terms of a clerical congregation, and automatically steer those who come to us towards becoming 'spiritan priests'".

"From the beginning of our missionary engagement, the vocation of spiritan brother has never been sufficiently appreciated...The dearth of vocations to the priesthood has pushed our vocations work in this direction, leaving aside the call to the vocation of brother..."

"Is the Holy Spirit trying to invite some of the laity to take part in the mission of the Church in a new and radical way, inviting us to design new structures to reflect the needs of the age in which we live?

Religious Brothers have the opportunity to live close to ordinary people, to the poorest and least important, facing with them the very concrete problems of everyday life, but vocations work has for so long been centered on the ministry of the priest, to the detriment of other kinds of ministry or service.

Lay people want to share our spirituality. Some are asking for a more direct collaboration as associate members.

Looking at the needs of the world today, perhaps we are being asked to break out of the "of certain concepts of what a missionary should be and open our minds to a greater variety of responses to the calls being made upon us".

When a young man asks to become a spiritan Brother as an answer to a missionary vocation, it is our responsibility to offer him a relevant formation:

General formation

"The more a Brother is trained to the same level as confreres who are priests, the more we will achieve a genuine unity in our religious family...How can he bring the Gospel to the world if he has not received a formation in keeping with the demands of mission today?



"A brother's specialisation is important"

Br José Lourenço Leitão-Daniel, Central Administration, LIAM, Portugal, who is responsible for the distribution of 30,000 copies of Accão Missionaria. "Today, a candidate must have reached the standard of secondary school leavers, so as to be able to deal with different problems..."

Professional training

"A person who enters the brotherhood should be given the opportunity to study or train in any area of academic discipline or trade for which he has an aptitude. The signs of the time should be studied..."

"Brothers should be highly qualified and compe-

tent in either the technical or professional field, in order to participate fully in mission life".

"The training of a Brother should be pushed as far as possible with the idea of him eventually being an instructor in a particular trade"...

."A Brother should be trained more with a view to being an in-

structor than to simply carry out projects himself".

"The spiritan missionary spirit helps me to be aware of various aspects of justice and peace and of a certain ecumenical dimension".

R-L: Br G. O'Keeffe, Director, Christian Relief and Development Association, 1976-1996, His Holiness, Arch. Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orth. Church and Arch. Timotheos, Head of the Orth. Ethiopian Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Department.

their surprise at the degree of domination that persists in spiritan life, in the relations between priests and lay people, men and women.

To carry out his vocation of bringing together the community, does the priest have to rely on the prestige of his position, or rather on the quality of his simple and generous contribution? Some spiritan priests try to listen respectfully to the initiatives of others; in trusting them like this they give them room to live in their own way

> and develop their varied gifts. spiritan Bis-hop, when he began his ministry, had a vision of himself marching out at the head of his flock. But he admitted that he eventually learnt, without suffering, that it was sometimes better for him to

be at the rear of the procession, allowing himself to be led by the faithful, where he was better placed to encourage them and help them keep to the right path.

How can we best carry out our mission as priests to watch over the authenticity of the faith of Christians and catechumens? By judging everybody according to uniform and preestablished criteria? Or rather by trying to discern the fruits of the Spirit in their journeyings and their initiatives.

D. How can we be priests who know how to listen

As we revise and renew our ideas of the different faces of the spiritan vocation - the Brother more directly involved in evangelisation, the missionary lay person - the spiritan priest should perhaps look again at the way he lives his ministry.

A group of lay associates, while very happy to have shared for a time in the life of a spiritan missionary community, nevertheless expressed

Witnesses to "fraternity" in Christ

"The Church entrusts to communities of consecrated life the particular task of spreading the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community and even beyond its boundaries...especially where today's world is torn apart by ethnic hatred or senseless violence...International Institutes especially are called to uphold and to bear witness to the sense of communion between peoples, races and cultures".

(Vita Consecrata: No. 51).

Fr. Joseph Lécuyer, our former Superior General, was an expert at Vatican II on the questions of episcopacy, priesthood and diaconate. He always insisted on this point regarding priesthood: through ordination, the priest does not receive a "power" but a "charism", a spiritual gift with which to serve the people of God with the charity of Christ.

As spiritan priests, what sort of results do we expect from our ministry? Do we look for quasi-automatic results which flow from a "sacred power" in a slightly magical way? Or do we think more in terms of the "grain of wheat that falls to the ground", with a fruitfulness that is never possessed in advance? The priest, like any other witness to the Gospel, has to pay the price of fruitfulness: the patient search with others for the truth, death to oneself, and humble service in the image of Christ the servant.

E: Do we sufficiently share our skills and responsibilities

"I made a deliberate choice to live in community, to share its goods and take part in its plans, not to live a separate life but always to discuss things.

I think that mission should no longer be looked on as something personal but rather as the work of a community that is formed for mission. The activities of the various people who make up this community complement each other".

"In pastoral situations, confreres should work as teams in accordance with the gifts in the group and not according to a clerical notion of hierarchy".

A generous pooling of different and complimentary contributions is fruitful both for the announcing of the Gospel and the growth of each individual. Do we take care to ensure that our community life and our sharing of tasks shows sufficient respect for the individual vocation and the particular gifts of each one?

Creative Responses

"Our Rule of Life invites us "to respond creatively to the needs of evangelisation of our time" (SRL 2). Such creativity calls for an attentive and precise study of these needs and an openness to the many different ways of replying to them which are complementary to each other.

One confrere, aged 77, comes to this conclusion: "God goes his own way". In the final analysis, he is the one in charge of mission. Our role is to observe carefully and interpret correctly the signs that he gives us, so as to help us remain on the right path.



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INFORMATION DOCUMENTATION

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I/D 56

General Council

December 1999

PREPARATION FOR MISSION TODAY

This edition of Information/Documentation is the result of a reflection by the General Council on some of the insights that emerged from the General Chapter at Maynooth. During the Chapter, we realised how fast the world is changing. Over the past thirty years, mission as proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom has acquired a new style - a style of presence, listening, sharing and dialogue. This new concept of mission calls for a different approach to missionary training. So these pages are intended to be a stimulus for all Spiritans, particularly superiors, formators and students, in their efforts to live out the spiritan charism in the light of the changed circumstances of today.

Statistics of the Congregation

A breakdown of the professed members according to their circumscription of origin on 1 October 1999.

Origin	Total	Bps.	Frs.	Brs.	Schol.
France	646	8	534	96	8
Ireland	495	3	461	21	10
Nigeria	359	2	195	7	155
Holland	205	2	1167	36	-
Portugal	192	2	145	33	13
West Africa Foundation	130	-	58	-	72
East Africa	123	, 1	77	-	45
Germany	99	2	77	18	2
Central Africa	96	-	46	2	48
USA/East	87	2	81	1	3
Switzerland	71	-	69	2	-
Poland	68	-	, 52	6	10
Angola	66	1	1 37	1	27
England	54	-	52	1	1
USA/West	48	-	43	2	3
Belgium	47	1	42	i 4	-
Canada	44	1	39	4	-
Trinidad	39	2	32	1	4
TransCanada	38	-	38	-	-
Brazil	30	3	17	4	6
Indian Ocean Foundation	23	-	7	-	16
Spain	20	-	16	3	1
Haiti	17	-	3	-	14
Congo-Kinshasa Foundation	15	i -	. 7	-	8
North-West African Foundation	10	, -	1 3	-	1 7
Puerto Rico	9	-	5	-	4
Mexico	7	-	, 2	-	5
South Central African Foundation		-	1	-	3
Paraguay	2	-	-	-	2

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMATION

⇒ Although the theme of formation was not explicitly dealt with in the Maynooth Chapter, it was nevertheless present in an informal way in the thought and discussion of the delegates throughout the four strands which summarise our spiritan life: our mission, our life in common, our sources of inspiration and our collaborative ministry. Formation was re-

According to the statistics of 1st October 1999, the total number of professed confreres in formation is 470. Of these, 384 are from Africa, 45 from Europe, 33 from North America and the Caribbean and 8 from South America. There are also 143 novices and 217 non-professed students in first cycle.

peatedly mentioned as a very important time in which our missionary vocation is taking shape and developing. The quality of our missionary commitment depends to a great extent on the quality of our formation. But it is equally true that our initial formation depends on the qual-

ity of the missionary commitment of the whole Congregation. On-going formation thus takes on a crucial importance; formation continues throughout our apostolate, just as the apostolate continues throughout our initial and on-going formation.

1

- ⇒ Prior to Maynooth, formation was treated in depth at the Itaici Chapter in 1992. At that Chapter the need was felt to maintain a balance between diversity and unity in our spiritan family. While acknowledging the diversity in our human and religious backgrounds, it recognized at the same time that our spiritan history and charism and the needs of mission today call for a degree of unity in our approach to formation. So the Chapter asked the General Council, in dialogue with major superiors and formators, to draw up general outlines of formation for the Congregation. This dialogue re
 - sulted in the publication of the "Spiritan Guide for Formation" in 1997. It is because of this that Maynooth did not feel there was a need to treat the question again as it was discussed sufficiently when the Guide was being prepared.
- → After a year of contact with the rich and multiform reality of our mission and its problems, the General Council is aware that spiritan formation initial and on-going is one of the most important tasks facing the Congregation today. It involves the transmission of the spiritan charism, in all its simplicity and radicality, to those of subsequent generations who
 - want to make it their centre of personal identification. In a changing world in which social well-being and consumerism are becoming the norm and in which young people are experiencing a certain instability, such a task is by no means easy, especially where it concerns a life-long commitment. We believe that the solution lies in the care and attention which circumscriptions give to the problems of formation. It also depends on the quality of the renewal and the spiritual and missionary witness of each Spiritan.
- ⇒ According to our Rule of Life, formation is the responsibility of the different circumscriptions. However, given the need for a better solidarity, organisation and rationalisation of human resources within the Congregation, the Maynooth Chapter gave the General Council more weight in matters of formation and entrusted it with greater powers of intervention (Maynooth 9.1). It is in this spirit that the General Council, having reflected on various questions relating to formation, now wishes to share these reflections and concerns with all confreres and to make some proposals.

1. A new style of mission

1.1. The views on formation expressed at Maynooth and the subsequent guidelines approved by the Chapter were based on the current vision that the Congregation has of its mission. The nature of our training is completely determined by our understanding of our mission. The Chapter reaffirmed that mission as the announcing of the Good News of the Kingdom has always been at the heart of spiritan life (SRL, 1) and it gave new emphasis to the evangelisation of the poor as our principal objective.



Fr Frezy Tam Tsi Kim (Indian Ocean Foundation) and Fr Chinua Okeke (Nigeria Province) with First Communicants at Malol, Papua New Guinea

- 1.2. Contemporary spiritan mission is seen first and foremost as "presence". "We go to people, not primarily to accomplish a task, but rather to be with them, live with them, walk beside them, listen to them and share our faith with them. At the heart of our relationship is trust, respect and love" (Maynooth, 2.1). In other words, mission is an experience of sharing, involving the establishment of relationships; it presumes that the missionary has a capacity to relate and to focus on others rather than himself. The fruits of this approach are a change of heart and mind, a new openness to each other of both people and missionary and a sense of joint responsibility leading to common action.
- 1.3. For us, mission is a spirituality rather than a strategy (Itaici, 2.1). We know that the Spirit is the Protagonist of mission and of all our activities (Maynooth, 2.3). He always precedes us, so the role of the missionary is to discover the action of the Spirit present in the midst of the people to whom he is sent; it is a pilgrimage of discovery. We are called therefore

to live our missionary life, including our period of initial formation, as a journey of faith, listening to and discerning the voice of God.

- 1.4. Mission involves crossing cultural borders. As members of an international family, we give witness to the Gospel among peoples of diverse languages and cultures. The fact that our communities are becoming more international and inter-cultural is itself a witness to Gospel values. In some cases, young confreres could be given the possibility of doing their theological studies in the country for which they will receive their first appointment (Maynooth, 2.29). However, it is desirable that initial formation should begin in one's own culture.
- 1.5. Mission is a community project and should be lived in community. Maynooth strongly reaffirmed that life in community is an essential element of the Spiritan vocation: "All confreres will make a sincere and genuine response to the call to live in community" (Maynooth 4.1). Our life in community and the degree to which we genuinely share need to be periodically evaluated; confreres living together must also discern the will of God together. In the same way, the atmosphere in a formation community should prepare our

young members for an authentic community life; it is there that they will discover the strength that can come from community prayer and the importance and richness of a sharing community for achieving a personal balance and a better service to mission.

1.6. Mission is solidarity with and being at the service of the poor; when seen in this way, Justice and Peace will be at the center of our mission. This

calls for a simple and moderate lifestyle. Contact and work with the poor during formation should help young confreres to experience this solidarity in a concrete way and prepare them to live in an appropriate manner.

1.7. Mission is also dialogue with other religions and other ways of thinking and living. Special attention has to be given to Islam since it is so prominent in many places where Spiritans are working. Young confreres should be taught to be open to others and to acquire a capacity for dialogue which is so necessary in today's world. They should learn to appreciate those who are different to themselves without losing their own basic motivations and convictions.

2. A new style of formation

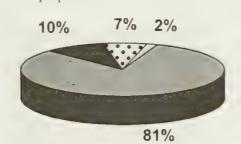
- **2.1.** The new concept of mission needs a new approach to the formation process by which the young confrere prepares for the difficult and demanding life ahead.
- 2.2. The programme should seek a balance between its academic content and its spiritual and human aspects. In any case, a good theological training has to be based on a solid human and spiritual formation. Special attention will be given to the academic areas which relate more directly to preparation for mission. Our vocation is to be a pastor rather than an academic; professional qualifications should only be sought with a view to future mission following a process of discernment in community.
- **2.3.** We conceive our missionary life and its period of preparation as a journey of faith, following Christ in his paschal journey and striving to conform ourselves to his likeness (cf. *Vita Consacrata* no. 65). There are some elements of this faith-journey which are of paramount importance: the living out of the paschal mystery; our life as a gift offered to God and

to the Church particularly in the service of the poor; listening to the Spirit speaking to us through the signs of the times. To this end, spiritual direction and formation in personal and community prayer are seen as an essential part of initial formation.

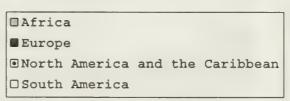
2.4 All members of the spiritan family should have a deep desire to live the charism of our religious family in a creative way. To bring this about,

those in formation should study and live out the spirituality of our founders while at the same time maintaining a constant contact with spiritan mission, especially in its commitment to the poor. When they come into contact with the problems of Justice and Peace, young Spiritans, through constant evaluation of their pastoral work, should learn how to analyse the mechanisms which favour and give rise to social inequalities and injustices at the local and world level.

2.5 Our training programmes will adopt more of an apprentice style, giving students opportunities to have personal experience of the reality of missionary life today. With a clear vision of what they are preparing for, they should allow themselves to be guided by



Percentage of students in the Congregation



the formators who will accompany their journey. The young confreres should be trained to be living witnesses of the message they preach. The process will be one of learning through experience.

2.6 Collaboration is an essential dimension of contemporary mission. We have been called to evangelise with others and in so doing, we become strengthened in our commitment as do those with whom we collaborate in the pursuit of common objectives. Very often and in many different ways, we work with lay people in fulfilling our missionary vocation. Moreover, in the Congregation today, we are experiencing a new phenomenon of lay people who are particularly attracted by our charism. They are interested in sharing our missionary vocation and the spirituality of our Founders. Therefore working with lay people should be a part of our formation process so that young confreres will be prepared to live and work with them in the future. In this way, any form of clericalism should be eradicated (Maynooth 5.15).

3. A new style of being formator

3.1. Another result of this change of approach and outlook is that the role of formator has also changed. A distinction must be made between a formator and a teacher/professor. Strictly speaking, formators are those who are trained in the skills for accompanying candidates and young conferes in their vocation journey and guiding them especially in making decisions. The *Spiritan Guide for Formation* underlines that to be trained as a teacher/professor is not

a sufficient preparation for undertaking the role of accompaniment (SGF 75). While both roles are fulfilled by the same person in many of our formation houses, it is also to be acknowledged that all confreres working in houses of formation in whatever capacity, have a formative role. Thus the selection of formators and their training should be done in the light of the nature of contemporary mission as outlined above. The Maynooth Chapter referred more than once to the training of formators as a pressing priority. To undertake such a crucial role, it is essential to have a period of spiritual, theological and psychological preparation. But it is not just a question of academic study: the

necessary skills for such a service can only be acquired through practical experience.

- 3.2. The choice and training of good formators should be a priority throughout the Congregation, but above all for the new Provinces, Foundations and Groups. Even though we are all imperfect and have our limitations, we still have our particular gifts. Future formators should be chosen from confreres who are still young, who are able to work in a team, who have had a rich missionary experience, who have qualities for relating and leadership and who through their simple and discreet witness can transmit enthusiasm to young people for the spiritan charism and mission. Paul VI reminded us that "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 41); if this is true for evangelisation in general, it is even more so when it comes to the formation of future missionaries.
- **3.3.** Formators should be a link between students in initial formation and actual missionary life, bringing to the houses of formation the witness of lived spiritan mission based on their own experience and on their contacts with other confreres in mission. They can also play an active role in the on-going formation of spiritan missionaries, giving input from their competence and receiving first hand information and wisdom from the field. Their position enables them to participate actively in research on contemporary mission, trying to discern from their reflection what are the new ways along which the Spirit is leading the Congregation, just like the scribe in the Gospel who becomes a disciple of the Kingdom of heaven (Mt 13, 52).



The EAP novitiate, Magamba - in the background the Poullart des Places building

3.4. Formators should see themselves as older brothers who, through their witness and presence, help

their younger brothers to discern the calls of God and to live the spiritan charism in a creative way. To build up—such a relationship, an atmosphere of trust and availability, listening, respect, dialogue and transparency is indispensable. These attitudes display the richness of the spiritan vocation.

"Formation is not just concerned with a specific period; it extends over our whole lives. Nor is it ever completed, for in each part of our lives, including our retirement, fresh calls are made on us, springing from new situations. Formation is an unending process" (Spiritan Guide for Formation no. 9).

B: PRESENT CONCERNS

In insisting that missionary training must be done with a view to contemporary mission and that the style of formation today should follow the apprenticeship model, we realise that it can often be very difficult to put this vision into practice. Many good things are happening already in various parts of the Congregation; in spite of severe limitations, many formators are

doing their best to provide young confreres with a formation that is appropriate to contemporary mission. However, there are a number concerns that we as a Council would like to share with you and which, in our estimation, need a joint effort in order to improve the quality of our training. These concerns come as a result of our contacts with houses of formation and from what we have heard from various regional meetings of formators.

1. The place of academics in our formation

Academic excellence is an essential part of our training as religious missionaries; in our specific preparation for ministry, either as brothers or priests, we follow rigorous academic programmes. We spend many years in this prepara-

tion at the end of which we are awarded various qualifications. Today, most of our seminaries are affiliated to universities. While this is important, it could have repercussions on the overall formation of our young members; there is a danger of over-stressing the intellectual content to the detriment of other dimensions of formation - the human, spiritual and

pastoral aspects. It is important to remember that formation deals with the integral development of the whole person and thus a certain balance is to be sought. Experience has shown that stressing one aspect to the neglect of the others creates an imbalance which is very difficult to rectify later on.

2. The shortage of formators

Formation is first and foremost a divine activity. It is God who calls each individual and commissions him or her: "Set Barnabas and Saul apart for me to do the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13, 2). But it is also a human process. God gives the growth but we have to do the planting and the watering. In accepting candidates into the Congregation, we have an obligation to provide them with an adequate and appropriate formation. The last two General Chapters have noted a growing shortage of formators throughout the Congregation. Indeed many of those we have at present are either untrained or essentially professors. This is a great challenge to all of us at our various levels of responsibility. The identification and training of future formators must be a priority for us, even at the expense of some of our current pastoral commitments.



Spiritan Students of theology with Fr. António Laranjeira in Mexico

"Formation does not depend primarily on a discipline imposed by authority; such a discipline is incapable by itself of producing a total commitment and giving a lasting shape to a character." SGF, 10.



Br Paul Ronssin helping young boys who are thinking of entering the seminary

3. Enthusiasm and Commitment

Mission is for us a life-long commitment. However, in recent years, and particularly at the Maynooth Chapter, it has been noted that some confreres, for a variety of reasons, seem to have lost their enthusiasm for mission (Maynooth 2.25). Perhaps this decline is partly due to a lack of updating in the presentation of the forms of mission that are suited to the situation of the world today. Therefore, there is a need to give special attention to our motivation in both initial and on-going formation.

In the past, confreres were appointed to a mission area where they would generally spend the whole of their active lives. Today we are experiencing the other extreme: a lack of stability or long-term commitment, on the part of some confreres, to a particular circumscription or mission area. Yet we invest so much time and energy in learning the language and culture of the people to whom we are sent; sometimes, this initiation period can last for two to three years before we are really able to do any ministry.

On first appointment, young confreres are assigned to a circumscription for a period of three years after which, through dialogue with the parties concerned, they can be appointed somewhere else. The General Council feels that this three-year period is too short and it should only serve as the absolute minimum. Let us remember that it takes a long time to get to know a people and to feel comfortable with their language and culture.

4. Large formation houses

In practice, it is very difficult to apply the apprenticeship model of formation when formators are so few and in situations where the number of students is very large. How can we ensure a family atmosphere in big structures? Is it not the right moment to come up with a policy concerning manageable numbers in one house? Some Congregations have a threshold in the "Finally, the question of brothers cannot be discussed without looking at our missionary history. The history has included some wonderful brothers, models of holiness such as we have all known..." (Itaici, 34,4).

number of students they will admit to any one community. Large numbers risk killing the family spirit. Should we continue to accept candidates without any limit? Is this good planning? Is there not a risk in such a policy of reverting to an impersonal and authoritarian model of formation that was sometimes practised in the past? In such cases, is it not advisable to think of rationalising the annual intakes, while at the same time planning creatively for an adequate solution, e.g. the creation of smaller units in the larger communities? A proper motivation and a long-term commitment to mission can be more easily developed when the numbers are not too large.

5. Formation Communities

For us Spiritans, community life is an essential element in our way of living and of exercising our apostolate (SRL 28). But this does not happen automatically or miraculously; it has to be worked at. Students should be introduced to it from the start of their formation and in all subsequent stages. The Guide for Formation spells out that it is the duty of formators and the whole formation community "to lead every future Spiritan progressively into living in community, so that each may discover both the riches it brings and the demands it makes" (SGF 33). A good formation depends to a great extent on the quality of the community life. This quality is the result of mutual confidence and trust among the members who make up the community. A community will be what its members make it; in itself, it is formative when it permits each one of its members to grow in fidelity to the Lord.

a) Special characteristics

What is the nature of a formation community? Is it the same as other spiritan communities? Should there be separate communities in a house where formation is taking place? A strictly apostolic community is characterised by its apostolic activities; its main concern is the way it lives and programmes its active engagements. On the other hand, the main preoccupation in a formation community is studies and preparation for mission. Such a community is made up of young confreres in training and older confreres who are their formators. Young confreres are placed under the direction of formators so as to be helped in discerning their vocation and in preparing for ministry. Formators have the

role of initiating students into our spiritan tradition.

In its essence, a formation community is the same as that which is outlined in chapter 3 of SRL but with the accent on the "masterapprentice" relationship. The master, as with Jesus and his disciples, accompanies the apprentices closely to ensure that they learn all the necessary skills for

their trade. For their part, the apprentices identify themselves with their master and enjoy many things in common. However, it goes without saying that the master has a certain responsibility for the apprentices. Formators have the duty to assist young confreres in discerning what is the will of God for themselves. They are their spiritual companions. Like those being formed, the formators also set out on a spiritual journey, trying to discern the nature of God's call for each individual. Their task is to ensure the spiritual, intellectual and human development of those entrusted to their care. They draw upon their own experience of religious apostolic life and on-going formation and pass on what they themselves have discovered and received (SGF, 10).



International Spiritan Meeting, Cameroun

b) Participation in decision making-processes

Formators should help to create a family atmosphere of simplicity and liberty where each one can speak out freely, an atmosphere where young confreres can raise any matter that is open to question (SGF 24). As in any spiritan community, formators are to make sure that students participate in the decision-making processes. Regular community meetings provide a forum where the community members can discuss all that



International Spiritan Mission Congress - SIST, Nigeria

concerns the life of the community. Regular and well-prepared community meetings are significant elements in the whole formation process (SRL 44).

C: PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

With a view to addressing the above concerns, the General Council has a number of proposals to put to superiors, formators, students and the entire spiritan family:

1. The training of formators as a priority

Regarding the shortage of formators, the picture is not altogether gloomy. Some superiors of circumscriptions and the General Council have already taken some steps to improve the situation. A good number of confreres are currently training to be formators so

within a few years the situation will be somewhat improved. During this summer, the Pan-African Region organised a short course for formators at SIST in Nigeria.

- The General Council will be ready to give financial assistance to Provinces, Foundations and Groups for the training of confreres for formation houses.
- The General Council, in dialogue with the relevant superiors, is willing to consider making a first appointment to a circumscription with a view to releasing for training another confrere who has been identified as a future formator.

- In view of the need for long-term planning and co-ordination in the area of formation, the General Council has decided to re-establish a Secretariat for Formation at the level of the Generalate. A full-time Secretary will be appointed to fill this post.

2. International meetings of formators

Formators need to come together from time to time to share experiences, to discuss problems relating to formation and to plan common strategies for the

future. At present, such meetings are taking place at regional level. While we encourage this, we also feel that, once in a while, it is good to bring them together in a wider international context. It will help them to get to know each other better and such gatherings can benefit from the contribution of visiting experts. A well-prepared international meeting of this sort can be very profitable and formative for those attending it, even if it inevitably involves problems of organisation, language, and finance. These gatherings could be organised on the basis of the different levels of formation - novitiates, postulancies and scholasticates. For its part, the General Council intends to take some initiatives in the near future to bring formators together in order to evaluate the Spiritan Guide for Formation and other aspects of our formation which need to be reflected upon.



Some of the 1st cycle students with Fr. José Maria de Sousa, at Pinheiro Manso in Porto, Portugal

3. Collaboration and exchange between Regions

There are several ways in which circumscriptions can help each other in the area of formation; for example, the regrouping of students, the exchange of personnel and the training of formators. Collaboration within a region and/or between regions can often be the best way of providing solutions to difficulties that are beyond the capabilities of individual provinces, foundations or groups. The present practices of circumscriptions in a region pooling resources, bringing students together and founding common formation programmes are all to be commended. Such collaboration will eventually lead to a better quality of formation (SGF, 81). We also encourage the exchange of formators and students from different regions. The Pan African Conference of Major Superiors and Formators, following the orientations of the Enlarged General Council at

Dakar, has taken seriously the question of the training of formators. Two centres for research and animation have been established in Africa: the Spiritan Centre for Mission and Spirituality at SIST, Nigeria, and at Bagamoyo, Tanzania. Another such centre has been proposed for Francophone Africa. Courses for the formation of formators will be offered as part of the programme.

4. Gatherings of Young Spiritans

The Maynooth General Chapter decided that the period between February 2, 2002 and Pentecost 2003 would be a special Spiritan Year for the Congregation. In 2002, we shall celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Fr. Libermann and the 150th anniversary of his death; in 2003 we will be marking the 300th anniversary of the foundation of our Congregation. This Spiritan Year is

seen as a time of jubilee, an occasion of sharing and celebration throughout the Congregation. It should also be a time when each circumscription examines itself in the light of the characteristics of a jubilee - conversion, liberation, and forgiveness; in other words, it can be made into an occasion of renewal for the entire Congregation.

The Council would like to invite each region to organise meetings of young Spiritans, either during the great Jubilee Year and/or during the Spiritan Year. Young confreres could be invited to give their own views about what the Jubilee or Spiritan Year means for them. A synthesis of those reflections would be sent to the Gener-

alate for subsequent communication to the entire Congregation. (The General Council will soon propose a theme for reflection to all confreres). The Spiritan Region of Europe has already planned a meeting of young Spiritans in formation which will take place in Belgium next April.

CONCLUSION

Although much of what is said above refers explicitly to the area of initial formation, it is nevertheless addressed to all confreres, especially with a view to our on-going formation. It is meant to help us all to update our response to God's continuing call, in faithfulness to our spiritan tradition and in openness to the changed forms of contemporary mission. We have tried to avoid re-writing the *Guide for Formation* in which the specific objectives and characteristics of spiritan formation are clearly elaborated.



INFORMATION DOCUMENTATION

C.S.Sp - Clivo di Cinna, 195 - 00136 Roma Italia

General Council

March 2000

SPIRITAN LAY ASSOCIATES

Since the Second Vatican Council, an ever increasing number of lay people have associated themselves with religious life. Through their contacts with various religious Congregations, they have come to share in their mission and their spirituality. In their families and their work-place, they try to live out the ideals of religious life from day to day. These ideals come to them as a breath of fresh air, giving a new meaning to their lives and helping them to deepen their faith and their commitment to the mission of lay people in the Church.

In many of the circumscriptions of our Congregation, lay people have shown the same interest in our mission and spirituality. In their search for a better way to fulfill their own Christian vocation and mission, they have been attracted by the Spiritan charism, especially when they have seen its concrete expression in the lives and example of individual confreres. Some are principally attracted by our spirituality, our sources of inspiration, our community life and prayer; others are inspired by our missionary undertakings. And, of course, some are inspired by both.

Today, the Spiritan family includes a large number of lay Christians who share our life and mission at different levels. Following the guidelines of Maynooth and the degree of their sharing in our spirituality and missionary commitment, we could distinguish various categories:

- Friends of the Spiritans collaborators in our work, who by their prayers, their sacrifices and their gifts help us to carry out our mission.
- Lay people who are attracted by the spirituality of our founders and who form groups for shared prayer and missionary reflection (*Les Fraternités Spiritaines*). By sharing and

living our spirituality, they also take part in our mission.

• Some lay people, having completed a period of training, commit themselves to a deeper association with the Congregation. As a sign of this commitment, they make a contract with the circumscription which receives them. These are the Spiritan Lay Associates. As such, they undertake to live according to these three ideals: the defense of the weak and the poor in society; a life of community and prayer (the details of which are adapted to each case); a precise commitment within the mission of the Congregation (according to their individual circumstances).

The purpose of this I/D, basing itself on the insights of the Maynooth Chapter, is to invite the whole Spiritan family to reflect on this aspect of the life of the Congregation, to support and strengthen the movement of Lay Spiritan Associates.



The group of Lay Spiritans at the meeting in Knechtsteden, Germany.

Where are they?

After the Second Vatican Council, several Spiritan circumscriptions tried to respond to the appeal it made to missionary Institutes "to use their experience to train and help those who would like to spend some time in missionary work" (Ad Gentes 27). Gradually, groups of Lay Associates began to emerge in our family from those who wanted to share our mission and spirituality.

At present, there are approximately 60 Lay Associates in the Congregation, divided amongst the following circumscriptions:

- 1 in Australia;
- 1 in Belgium;
- 2 in Canada;
- 11 in **England**, including three married couples;
- 3 in **France**, including a married couple;
- 2 in **Germany**, amongst many other lay helpers;
- 3 in Holland:
- 1 Brazilian lady in **Puerto Rico** who works in missionary animation;
- 2 in Spain;
- 11 in **TransCanada**, including 5 married couples. This Province probably has the longest experience of working with Lay Associates.
- 2 in USA/East;
- 17 in **USA/West**, including one married couple, 8 members and 7 candidates in formation.

Some Provinces have had a missionary awareness programme in their country for a long time and lay people have an increasing role in this work. Some put the accent on spirituality (Fraternités Spiritaines), others on help and commitment to mission (missionary groups). In an effort to bring the two aspects together, spirituality and mission, most Provinces have formation programmes and are putting a great deal of hope in this lay movement.

What do they do?

Many are involved in varied works for justice and peace;

others collaborate with us in missionary awareness programmes in local Churches. They help in the training of volunteer missionaries and even, in some cases, of professed Spiritans. They are involved with our mission "ad extra" in Africa, Latin America and Australia.

Since 1995, the Justice and Peace portfolio in England has been in the hands of the Lay Spiritan Associates. In TransCanada, they have been working for a long time with native peoples in religious education, in support of immigrants and in the preparation of missionary volunteers for VICS (Volunteer International Christian Service). In USA East and West, they train missionary volunteers and lay people who want to be associated with us. In Holland and Germany, several groups of Spiritan collaborators are deeply involved with the Congregation and carry out work which would be impossible to maintain without their help – like missionary awareness, presence in schools and support for immigrants and those seeking asylum. In Spain, lay associates participate in welcoming immigrants and raising missionary consciousness.

For the last 15 years, lay representatives of the North American Provinces have been meeting together and they have produced a Guide for Associates. Europe began similar meetings three years ago. The first meeting of associates from the whole Congregation took place in Pittsburg in 1991. Would it not be good to have another such international meeting in the Spiritan Centenary Year?



Maria Marguerita (Spain) with a group of young people who are working with the poor.

What do they say about themselves?

One of the aims of this edition of I/D is to give the Associates a chance to speak. A questionnaire was sent to Associates and we received answers from several individuals and groups. Here are some extracts from their replies:

a) What attracts us to the Spiritan family

The Spirit, the breath of our life

"I have always been attracted by the name and the presence of the Spirit, the great "Unknown", but so present, necessary and intimate to the life of the

Church and of each person" (M.L. Spain).

"I was given a book on the writings of Libermann. I became completely absorbed in the writings. It was as if Libermann himself speaking to me. 1 identified with his spirituality in his mission to the Blacks, Whatever direction the Spirit may lead, 1 am indebted to the Spiritans for sharing their spirit with me" (S. S., USA/W).

always available for the people and of course, they were so happy ministering to the poor of which our parish had many. ... These guys were so human and yet there was something about them that made them very special. If these ordinary people could be so committed to living the gospel values, we wanted to know what their secret was so we could do the same" (J. & P. S., USA/W).

The possibility of living mission

"The mission overseas is also appealing... It helped us to open our views about mission overseas and in Holland. It helped us to look critically at our society, our lives and our contribution to society" (Lay Spiritans from Holland).



Professed and Lay Spiritans united in the same struggle for justice and peace: in the human chain at Cologne, calling for the remission of debt for poor countries.

Mission to the poorest

"What is "appealing is that Spiritans really are present among the poor and the outcasts. They live out their spirituality. They do not live for themselves" (Lay Spiritans from Holland).

"I was struck by the fact that they prefer to help people who live in the worst conditions and have the least opportunities" (H.G.S. Germany).

· Proximity and simple life-style

"What really attracted us to the Spiritans was observing the ones ministering to the African Americans in our parish. There was a genuine concern for the plight of the African American people. They were

b) Our place in mission

Living mission: in the service of the Kingdom

"There are many ministries, but the same Spirit. Through Baptism we are called to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. Anything that does not require priestly ordination can be carried out by Lay Spiritums" (S. S., USA West);

"We think that most of the work could be done by lay associates...It is important to have occasions when we can meet, reflect on our work and lives, broaden our view of being a Christian at this time and on the impact of Christianity on our lives" (Lay Spiritans from Holland).

Many possibilities

"Lay people can work in teaching, in hospitals, in kindergartens, in orphanages, in justice and peace projects, in supporting unions, in centres of missionary awareness. There is also a role for us in the professions as doctors, nurses, agricultural advisors, etc.(M.L.A. Brazil).

"...in reading and writing classes for the marginalised, caring for the sick and those who live alone, helping in centres for alcoholics" (M.L. Spain).

"The Spiritans were living in very poor conditions and were constantly ill. In response, I myself and other men travelled to PNG to build them a proper house. I have lived there constantly since 1983 and take part in their meetings and planning" (K.C., Australia)

Mission "ad extra" and missionary awareness

"Some of us worked for 4-5 years in Tanzania and Zimbabwe: others visited the missions overseas...We work in the field of mission awareness and support groups of young people who are going to visit a country in the south. We accompany groups of volunteers who have had a mission experience and whose members want to reflect on their experiences and on the impact it has had on their personal lives" (Lay Spiritans from Holland).

c) An added dimension to our lives

Being more adult and attentive to others

"Contact with Spiritans has helped me to become more mature in my faith, more responsible and attentive to others, beginning with my own family" (M.D. Portugal);

"What I do flows from who I am. My collaboration with the Spiritans has helped me to become a better person. I am in the process of becoming all that God created me to be. Through the inspiration and guidance of the Spiritans I am growing daily. My personal, professional and religious relationships have all grown because I have grown" (S. S., USA).

. Growing in the spiritual life

"The regular reading of Libermann's life has made a difference in our faith-life. We are very conscious of our being Lay Spiritans and that our colleagues expect more from us than they would from the 'ordinary lay people' - although we are just ordinary lay people who are Lay Spiritans" (J. & P. S., USA/W);

"The spirituality and the mission of the Spiritans is something dear to my heart. I thank the Congregation for all that it is doing and for all that it has done for me" (A.M. Portugal);

"The Spiritans give me space where I can get my breath back and where I can reflect on my life" (B.A. Germany);

"The Congregation of the Holy Spirit has become for me, down the years, a place for re-charging my batteries, a place of stock-taking and discernment, a place of listening and sharing. Special times like retreats, shared prayer, discussions with different priests have all helped us to continue on the road that God has mapped out for us, to go further in our commitment without losing sight of the essential. The Spiritan community has given me the strength to go where I had no intention of going" (D.F. France).



The Spiritan family, the rainbow, where everybody is welcome Mrs. Sharon Sani, a Lay Associate from USA West

. Living professional life in a different way

"We can live out our professions with a missionary perspective. For example, as teachers we have opportunities to arrange meetings and experiences for our pupils where they can come face to face with the needs of the poor and acquire a sense of social responsibility" (H.G.S. Germany).

d) What we seek from the Congregation

"The Congregation can help us with living out our particular Christian vocation by continuing to welcome us as part of their community with all the support and love that being a part of a family brings" (Lay Spiritans from England).

"The Congregation can help us to attempt to live the "Rule of Life" for they are the ones who called us to be Spiritan by the way they live it. All we ask for is encouragement and support in our attempting to live out the Spiritan mission" (J.& P. S., USA West).

"The Congregation could help, in that it wants to ensure a continuity of the Spiritan spirit in its work where it is itself unable to continue. This would help us to look together for the most suitable way for lay people and the members of the Order to work together" (H. G. S., Germany).

e) The meaning of a formal commitment

"In wishing to be associated with the Congregation, we express our desire to collaborate fully with the Spiritan mission and to support its projects...We want to increase our commitment and have close ties with the Spiritan community that is nearest to us" (D.F. France);

"By becoming an Associate we feel that we have become more spiritually aware. The feeling of belonging we have is an immense strength in our daily life. The monthly meetings we attend and the special days of reflection are very uplifting and important to us all. There is a very special need to come together as a 'community' to pray, share, discuss and socialise" (Lay Associates from England);

"The commitment makes me feel a part of the Congregation and it gives me a concrete way of living my faith in communion with the Spiritans; in sharing their spirituality, I feel an especially deep relationship with the Spirit of the Lord" (M.L. Spain);

"I feel there is no need to enshrine our living relationship into a contract. But if there has to be one, it should be a reciprocal commitment which clarifies the most important points" (H.G.S. Germany).

A possible way forward

Based on their experience, several circumscriptions offer the following programme to those who wish to become Spiritan Lay Associates:

- 1. Some criteria for admission: live a committed Christian life; maintain regular contact with Spiritans; certain limitations of age;
- 2. Training: a period of Christian and missionary preparation, including a formation in the spirituality of our founders. Several factors must be borne in mind: the duration, the family circumstances of the candidate and his her availability. The hope is that the candidate will discover and live out this vocation as a concrete way of following Christ, in the context of a deep communion with the Spiritans and other Spiritan Lay Associates;
- 3. Request for admission: this should be done in writing and, if possible, accompanied by a recommendation from a professed Spiritan or a Spiritan Lay Associate;
- 4. Admission and acceptance: the candidate is accepted by the Provincial and his Council;
- 5. Formal commitment: this takes the form of an agreement signed by the candidate and the Congregation. It is initially for three years and is renewable. There is then the possibility of a permanent commitment. By this act, the Lay person declares his her readiness to accept a concrete commitment in the Congregation.

OUR RECENT HISTORY (some important moments)

1 Openness to the idea and conformation by our Rule of Life

Collaboration with lay people is part of our Spiritan tradition. The question was raised in our post-conciliar Chapter of 1968-69, in response to the recommendations of Vatican II, under the heading of new forms of membership. This Chapter declared that "Major Superiors can accept as Associate Members priests and laymen who wish to consecrate themselves to the work of the Congregation by adopting our way of life" (14b).

Subsequent Chapters (1974 and 1980) encouraged this initiative. For example, the Chapter of 1974 said that non-juridical ties could be made with the Congregation by individuals who would like to live our life of prayer, get to know our spirituality, help our missionary apostolate or even share our community life for a period of time. If they so wish, these persons could ask for a more precise commitment in the Congregation (63).

The Rule of Life took things further. Article 24.3 allowed for further experimentation or development of existing systems: "In some places those who are working with us wish to be associated with us. We welcome them with joy, inviting them to share our spirituality and our apostolic life. The conditions of their acceptance and their work are decided at the level of each circumscription. In every case, there is a written agreement" (cf. also SRL 135.1 and 247.1.19).

2 The Chapter of Itaici (1992): Official welcome of lay people

For the first time, two Lay Associates were invited to take part in a General Chapter. Summing up the ways in which lay people wish to be associated with us, the Chapter said: "In the past twenty years, many lay people have shown a special interest in the Congregation and in different ways have worked and prayed alongside us. Some seek an on-going loose association, others a closer connection for a limited period, others again a more permanent commitment to the life and works of the Congregation" (Itaici 18).

Itaici saw Lay Associates as a gift of God and an enrichment of our Spiritan family; it is a sign of the value of our spirituality and a challenge that we accept with hope and confidence. Even if we are not sure at the moment where this path will lead us, we nevertheless see it as a sign of the times and an invitation from the Holy Spirit to move forward, without too much nostalgia for the past.

The Chapter of Maynooth (1998): Lay Spiritans in the Spiritan Family

This Chapter saw the presence and the witness of three lay people as a great blessing; they had a considerable influence on the reflections and decisions taken and helped the capitulants to realise that sharing our mission and our spirituality are essential parts of our vocation.

The Chapter encouraged Lay Associates "to form their own structures according to the needs of each particular group" (4.22). The Congregation was asked to give "a special welcome to those who feel attracted to our spirituality and work; we will help them to discern their personal vocation in the Church" (5.6). "A professed Spiritan will be appointed to accompany the Lay Associates in each circumscription where they exist" (4.23).



Lay Spiritans play their part in mission, catechetics, teaching, building. Kevin Conway building a church tower in Papua

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

1. Charisms are meant to be shared

Charisms are gifts from God for the *whole* Church. The apostolic exhortation on Consecrated Life points out that religious have realised that their charism can be shared with the laity. (Vita Consacrata 54).

The way a charism is lived is not something fixed once and for all. We live in a changing world where

new needs and challenges are constantly arising. So there are different ways of living the Spiritan spirituality and vocation. Is it not a sign of the times that a growing number of lay people want to be associated with our Congregation? They certainly do not arrive emptyhanded; they bring us their experience, their talents and their know-how. They also produce new insights and take dynamic inspiration from the charism of our founders, thereby making this sharing of our inheritance into a new source of enrichment for ourselves.

This bringing together of our spiritual life and a different set of experiences gives the Congregation a new lease of life. Professed and lay people together can discover a new enthusiasm that is imaginative and creative and thus produce relevant answers to the questions and needs of society today.

2. The role of lay people in evangelisation

For centuries, spirituality and the study of theology was the preserve of clerics and religious. Mission and evangelisation were also seen as reserved to religious and clerical institutes. But Vatican II insisted that there is a fundamental equality in the Church; all baptised people receive a missionary vocation from Christ in line with their particular circumstances. Christians have to help each other to live this vocation.

If we define evangelisation as the building up of the Kingdom of God, lay people can bring the Good News into the various secular activities in which they are engaged just as much as priests and religious. Is it not true that the signs of the times are telling missionary institutes that they must be open to a greater participation from the laity? And is this just a passing phenomenon or will it be a permanent feature of missionary congregations in the future? There is no denying that very many congregations today are seeking ways of integrating lay people into their religious families.

3. Mission in a spirit of collaboration

"The Chapter experiences underlined how collaboration is an essential dimension of contemporary mission. Such is the complexity of mission today that we cannot effectively accomplish it in isolation. Working with others strengthens us in our commitment and also benefits those with whom we collaborate in the pursuit of common objectives" (Maynooth 5).



There are married couples and individuals in the Lay Associates

John and Mary Notaro, a married couple from USA West.

In our day, a growing number of lay people are expressing the desire to share in mission and adopt the spirituality of different religious orders as associates. We do not know where this will lead us, but we are convinced that the Holy Spirit is behind this movement. It is sure to bring about changes in the way we look at the laity and religious life. The Maynooth Chapter urged us to be open to this collaboration, while remaining faithful to our charism and preserving our identity.

This sharing is an opportunity for spiritual and missionary renewal

"We see that lay people and professed Spiritans are in a way being pushed towards each other. On the one hand, the Congregation seeks to enhance its identity, its charisms, its spirituality, its tradition as a useful resource for the future of the world, for the setting up of the Kingdom of God... On the other hand, many people are looking to religious traditions to seek meaning for their lives. Many are looking for companions who will work with them with a view to building a better world for all" (Frans Wijnen. Maynooth 1.18).

This collaboration is also a grace for us because it leads us to change our way of living mission and ministry. It prompts us to look again at the way we carry out our mission as Spiritan priests – never as an exercise of power but always as a service, eradicating any trace of authoritarianism and clericalism from our relationships. It pushes us to be as close as possible to

people – their culture, the concrete realities of their lives – and to share our faith with them. Finally, it forces us to a deeper and more genuine fidelity to our Rule of Life:

- A more radical commitment to the poor;
- A greater intimacy with God and a return to our sources of inspiration;
- A better quality of relationships and community life.



Professed and non-professed Spiritans have already travelled far together. But there is still a long journey ahead in the service of the Kingdom and the Church. Have courage, the Spirit of God is leading us.

[&]quot;We are searching for a community that is united heart and soul – a community of professed Spiritans and Lay Associates with a spirit of openness, simplicity and kindness towards one another, working together to build the Kingdom of the God of love, justice and peace" (Lay Spiritan Guide from TransCanada and USA West).



INFORMATION DOCUMENTATION

C.S.Sp - Clivo di Cinna, 195 - 00136 Roma Italia

General Council

December 2001

THE ENLARGED GENERAL COUNCIL OF PITTSBURGH

Duquesne, 24 June - 07 July 2001

"Now is the time to live by faith" (Libermann)

In this edition of Information/Documentation, the General Council would like to share the fruits of the recent EGC with all the Congregation. From the diagnosis and suggestions that emerged we will highlight the concrete conclusions from the principal points on the agenda. But before getting down to the detail, we will start by reflecting on what can be discerned by reading between the lines of the interventions and discussions of this meeting.

Our mission tested by faith

It is possible that the title of the Superior General's report to the EGC, "Testing our Missionary Vision against reality" could be misleading, as if we were trying to say that the strength of our missionary inspiration could be weakened in the light of the difficulties of real life. But the truth is the exact opposite, as the preacher of the opening retreat put it so well: "Man is not man until he reaches his breaking-point and still survives unbroken. In a similar way, faith is no longer faith until all grounds for belief have been swept away but faith still endures" At the very heart of our mission we are exposed to the challenge of reality and faith.

At first glance, our mission does not appear on the programme of the EGC, apart from the introduction. But in fact, it was the constant point of reference for all that was said, from the interventions in the general assembly to the discussions in smaller groups. Like an underground stream that gives direction to our lives, that gives us our unity, it constantly reveals itself in our plans and discussions. Our mission today makes us face up to areas where we have to break with the past. Are missionary vocations going to dry up completely in our older Provinces? How can we share the Gospel with secularised societies

or a world full of tensions and conflicts? How can we impact on our surroundings to ensure greater justice, peace and respect for creation? How can we help to heal confreres who are the victims of traumatic violence or of their own fragility? How can we find the money to run our mission and to live a genuine solidarity amongst ourselves? Where will we find the spiritual energy to go as far as risking our lives in war zones (SRL 10)?

The context in which these questions are posed already contains the germ of a reply. At the start of the EGC we remembered our confreres who have suffered "without breaking" in Angola, Congo Kinshasa, Sierra Leone and Congo Brazzaville, showing what is possible "for those who believe". It is significant that we can speak openly of "insurmountable obstacles" to the preaching of the Gospel, of the difficulties we have in living "Cor Unum et Anima Una", of our own personal weaknesses. An awareness of our fragility does not weaken the strength of our commitment: it rather encourages us to search humbly together for new initiatives. The Spiritan Year will be "the favourable time" for putting new life into our faith.



Participants at the General Enlarged Council

The challenges of reality teach us to develop a *real* faith, freeing ourselves from all forms of pretence and self-delusion. They make us more aware of both the riches and the problems of others; they persuade us to put all our trust in the Lord and his Spirit. It is only when we are reduced to nothing that we can begin to develop this total trust. It gives us the patience to

move forward in collaboration with others. When we come up against a thousand difficulties, when we arrive at the limit of our own strength, it is then that we can begin to live with that true faith which is the source of new friendships and missionary generosity. At Pittsburgh, we felt something of the joy that our vocation can still bring us today.

FORMATION IN RELATION TO NEW ASPECTS OF MISSION

The Maynooth Chapter spoke a lot about our Spiritan mission in today's world and the new challenges that this imposes on us. Mission as proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom is at the heart of our Spiritan life and ministry (2 intr.). It is mission that defines our being as Spiritans. The Chapter noted that in recent times, a certain style of Spiritan approach to mission has emerged clearly: that more emphasis is placed on being close to people, on the quality of our life and presence among them, especially the poor. This new style of mission has enormous consequences for the initial training of our young people who will have to meet the challenges involved. It is essential that we assist them with the type of formation that would help them to cope with the demands of being a missionary in an increasingly complicated world. They should be helped to attain the necessary maturity and the capacity of bearing with the real hardships of today's world. Maynooth said that students should be given opportunities to have personal experience of the characteristics of missionary life today (2.25; 3.4). So, formators need to inculcate a missionary zeal to the students, helping them to be attentive to the various forms which poverty can take. The EGC at Duquesne, underlined that students must be assisted to have pastoral concern for the poor, be close to them, work with them, and listen to them. This is an essential part of our charism as Spiritans. In this the personal experience and witness of the formators are of primary importance.

RENEWAL OF RELATIONSHIPS IN FORMATION

Formation is first and foremost a divine activity. It is God who calls the individual candidates and moulds them like the potter. Thus the journey of formation is a journey of faith (GSF, 7). Formators are entrusted with the ministry of assisting the students to discern well their vocation. They accompany them on their formation journey after the example of Jesus with the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24, 13-16). This accompaniment allows

both the formators and the students to build close relationships of spiritual companionship. This relationship is based on mutual confidence, trust, transparency, freedom, and responsibility. In this way formators become like older brothers mentoring their young brothers. The EGC stressed that a balance should be sought between the necessary ultimate authority of the formators and the need for a human, family-like relationship with students.

Again the Maynooth Chapter said that our formation programmes should adopt more of an *apprentice* type of formation, which gives students the opportunity to learn by doing, ie., by being exposed to the realities of missionary life today (2.25). The EGC believed that there is no one model which is exclusively adequate. Thus, it was suggested to complement the apprentice model with other models such as the "family" model of relationship adopted by the African Synod. This family model would allow each one to have a sense of belonging.

LENGTH OF FORMATION PROGRAMMES

As a congregation whose primary *raison d'etre* is mission, the purpose of our formation is to prepare better agents for the ministry of evangelisation. All our formation programmes have to be in consonance with that goal. In recent years there is a tendency to add more and more years to our formation programmes. Partly, it is because of our collaboration with other institutes and partly because of a certain desire to acquire higher diplomas and degrees.



One of the discussion groups

The participants at the EGC observed that this tendency to prolong formation programmes unnecessarily should be avoided. A lot of our students are in their 30's by the time they finish their initial formation. It is not healthy to keep young adults for too long without proper responsibility. There was a proposal that we should put a time limit on the number of years one spends in initial formation. The EGC stressed that the quality of our formation does not depend primarily on the length of formation programmes but rather on the personal conviction and disposition to live a life of witness. It underlined the religious-missionary dimension of our formation, and questioned the tendency of a largely clerical formation. As a follow-up to this proposal, the General Council recommends that as far as possible the time spent for learning human sciences, (Philosophy) and Theology should not exceed 7 years.

In addition, the EGC recommended that vocations to the Brotherhood should be actively promoted because they are an essential component of our Spiritan family (I/D, No. 55 of April 98).

FORMATION FOR SPIRITAN SPIRITUALITY

Spiritan spirituality has been a point for discussion for some years now. Some would even wonder if there exists a Spiritan spirituality at all? Our spirituality is not something different from what we are and do. It derives from the charism of our founders and our experiences of the Holy Spirit in the course of the years. Thus, apart from our prayer life, EGC added that spiritual direction and accompaniment are essential elements in the life of confreres. The EGC said that students have to be introduced to the life of prayer and spiritual accompaniment so that they may progressively identify themselves with the Spiritan charism and spirituality. The EGC stressed the need for coherence and continuity in the approach to Spiritan spirituality throughout the various stages of Spiritan formation.

MINISTRY OF FORMATION

The ministry of formation has to be seen as part and parcel of our missionary work. Despite the repeated calls for choosing and training a sufficient number of formators since the Itaici Chapter, the problem is far from being solved. Maynooth said that the training of formators is a priority and must be one of the main preoccupations of all those in positions of responsibility (2.31). So, the EGC said that each circumscription with a formation programme should have a long-term policy and plans in regard to formation personnel; it should draw-up a list of confreres with the aptitude and qualities for being good formators and make arrangements to have them trained. Frequent improvisations should be avoided. The EGC recommended that each circumscription have at least one formator with in-depth training; other formators could perhaps avail of shorter courses. These confreres would be people who are trained and experienced not only in academics, but also in the "art of accompaniment" and who would accompany the others in the skills of formation. The formators' personal experiences and lifewitness are indispensable for giving tonality to the formation work. That is why there has to be a special care in identifying and selecting only those who are well motivated and who have a prior missionary experience. Formators should have some awareness and knowledge of the culture of the students with whom they are working.

An itinerant group of formators to train formators was suggested. The General Council would see this taking the form of a group of resource persons who can be invited individually to animate formators in their ongoing formation.

FIRST APPOINTMENTS

IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSION

First appointment is one of the most important moments for a young Spiritan and can have immense implications in the way he lives the rest of his life as a Spiritan. This is one of the reasons that the Rule of Life entrusts making first appointments to the Superior General and his Council. (SRL 158; 249.2.3). The General Council also uses first appointment to give effect to the missionary orientations of the whole Congregation as well as to assure interdependence and continuity of the works of the Congregation. (Maynooth 2.33-2.38).

The Enlarged General Council reaffirmed that first appointments must always be for the good of our mission and this should be inculcated into the young confreres in formation from early on in their formation. This is necessary because the kind of formation they get determines the way they will work in the field. The EGC insisted that there should be early exposure to mission and that the acquiring of advanced degrees should not be given more prominence during initial formation.

A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

Most confreres requesting first appointment explicitly emphasise the vital importance of community in their lives as Spiritans. This is consistent with our Rule of Life (SRL 27,28) and with our General Chapters (Spiritan Life 1980: 85,170,171 and Maynooth 4.3). The Enlarged General Council was convinced of the crucial necessity of this dimension, and therefore recommended that we should not run the risk of assigning a young confrere to an appointment where community life and support are inadequate, even when the "imperative necessities of ministry" are at stake. Community support implies that the newly arrived confrere will be guided, especially at the beginning, by a fellow Spiritan who is seriously interested in encouraging authentic communication and that the young confrere is given a sense of belonging in

the community and is not simply used to fill gaps. It implies sharing equally in the life and goods of the community.

ACQUIRING THE NECESSARY TOOLS FOR WORK

The early months of a new mission appointment should be devoted essentially to acquiring fluency in the local language of the place and becoming acquainted to some degree with local realities (Maynooth 3.3). Without knowledge of the language and culture of the place there are bound to be difficulties. It was therefore recommended at the EGC that a "Guide" be prepared by the General Council containing the details of all that is expected of the sending and receiving circumscriptions as well as of the confrere himself. This is to be given to all confreres going on first appointment. The General Council intends to follow up on this in the immediate future.

THE DURATION OF FIRST APPOINTMENT

In its discussion, the Enlarged General Council noted that there is a common misconception that a first appointment lasts for three years. If such were the case, the first appointment would then be regarded as a sort of practical training course in pastoral work, at the end of which confreres would again be available to their circumscriptions "of origin" for further appointments. Maynooth (3.3) clearly insists that first appointment is for an extended period of time. The first appointment is no different from other appointments and is intended to provide young Spiritans with an opportunity to give themselves fully to the mission which is entrusted to them. This goal requires a period of at least six years, and often many more, especially in cases where a particularly heavy investment is required to become familiar with the local cultural context.

The Enlarged General Council realised that there is an urgent need for human resources in some circumscriptions, especially in the area of formation. These circumscriptions tend to call back some of their confreres, who are now on their first appointment, at the earliest possible time. However, when young confreres leave on their first appointment with the clear understanding that they are only going for a short time, the very quality of their first apostolic commitment is at risk; this can have serious implications for their future life as missionaries.



Another discussion group

In the spirit of the Rule of Life and the Maynooth Chapter, the Enlarged General Council recommended that the General Council take action to dispel the misconception that first appointments are for three years. In particular it suggested an extension of the period of time in the Administrative Guide (4.2.2) which set the minimum period for a first appointment as three years during which a change of appointment would need the agreement of the General Council. The General Council has decided in the light of these discussions to extend this period from three to six years. Even after the minimum period of six years, the province "of origin" cannot call back the confrere on its own authority; this can only be done with the consent of the superior of the circumscription to which he has been appointed. (SRL 156; 159.2; Directory for Organisation No 65).

OUR MATERIAL GOODS IN THE SERVICE OF MISSION

Interdependence and Solidarity

A difficult financial situation

The Enlarged General Council took stock of the difficult financial situation in which many confreres and the Congregation as a whole find themselves. This has been a constant worry for the General Council. Several delegates exposed the particular difficulties of their own circumscriptions – especially regarding formation and the daily life of the confreres. While expressing their gratitude for the help they are receiving from the rest of the Congregation, they explained the efforts they are making to find local sources of economic support.

All agreed that we must continue to ensure that our life-style is simple and moderate, similar to the lives of the poor people whom we are sent to serve (SRL 71), and

that amongst ourselves there will be no rich and no poor confreres (Maynooth 6, Introduction).

Good administration of what we have

Echoing what was said at Maynooth, the delegates stressed the importance of using the means we already have as efficiently as possible in the service of Mission. This is true at all levels, from the Generalate to individual communities. Management must be clear and precise and the different roles of bursar and superior respected. Councils of circumscriptions and communities, as well as advisory financial Councils, should listen to one another and keep each other informed. As the *Rule of Life* reminds us (SRL 72), we all share joint responsibility for material goods in their acquisition, their management and their utilisation for Mission.

The resources managed by the Generalate come from investments set up in the past and from the wonderful mutual help that is renewed each year by contributions to *Cor Unum*, by direct aid from one circumscription to another and by partnerships to support new missionary undertakings. We are seeking ways to increase the amounts at our disposal and to organise our solidarity more efficiently. We are also looking for completely new sources.



Working in a discussion group

Increasing our resources

The Enlarged General Council gave its approval to an initiative of the General Council to create a new fund destined for the general needs of our mission (cf. Maynooth 6.7 para 2), made up of money generated within the Congregation as well as from new sources outside. On the occasion of the Spiritan Year, the General Council will be asking all circumscriptions which can afford it for 5% of their reserves. They have also appointed an assistant General Bursar to organise fundraising in the northern continents.

The new fund is not a replacement for *Cor Unum*, which is aimed largely at formation needs; this will remain the normal channel for Spiritan solidarity in the area of formation. The Enlarged Council reaffirmed that, in accordance with the decisions of the Maynooth General Chapter, all circumscriptions must contribute to *Cor Unum* each year, even if the amount is only symbolic for some of them. It was also restated that *Cor Unum* contin-

ues to be the preferred vehicle for mutual help; direct aid between circumscriptions is legitimate as long as it does not diminish the amount available for distribution by the General Council through *Cor Unum*.

Alongside these efforts, it is essential that needy communities and circumscriptions which seek aid via *Cor Unum* should re-double their efforts to become self-supporting – contracts with the dioceses, pastoral or intellectual work which carries a salary, small industries, plantations,

letting of property, collections, works that are subsidised etc. The E.G.C. stressed the need for every Spiritan to work for economic autonomy within the context of community life and in conformity with our Rule of Life. Moreover, direct aid (e.g. from a circumscription of origin to one of its confreres appointed elsewhere) must always be sent to the community or circumscription rather than to the individual confrere concerned.

Health insurance for all

The Enlarged Council was anxious that all confreres should be covered by health insurance. The General Council would like all circumscrip-

tions where such insurance is not universal to look into the matter and take the necessary steps to bring it about. They could look for a local solution or, if that is not feasible, seek out an international company. For those who so wish, the General Bursar's Office could come up with concrete suggestions for their consideration. In this area as well, individuals, communities and circumscriptions will be encouraged to help themselves as far as possible while appealing also to the wider solidarity of the Congregation.

Everything in the service of Mission

The mind of the E.G.C. could be summarised as follows: the material resources at our disposal are not sufficient to cover our needs; we must use what we have as efficiently and economically as possible; we must continue to look for means of self-help while developing our excellent tradition of mutual solidarity. In this way, living out our religious poverty, we will be better able to accomplish the missionary task that the Lord has given us.

THE SPIRITAN YEAR

1. A Unique Opportunity

The Spiritan family will shortly celebrate three very significant moments in its history: 2nd February, 2002, the 150th anniversary of the death of Francis Libermann; 12th April, 2002, the second centenary of his birth in Saverne; 27th May, 2003, the third centenary of the

founding of the Congregation. To mark these important anniversaries the 1998 General Chapter decided that a Spiritan Year be celebrated throughout the Congregation, beginning on 2nd February 2002 and ending on Pentecost Sunday 2003. The aim of the Spiritan Year is twofold: to encourage a renewal of the Congregation and to make our Spiritan missionary spirituality better known.

The participants at the EGC endorsed the conviction of the General Council that the forthcoming occasion of the celebration of our anniversaries offers us a unique opportunity for spiritual renewal in the Congregation at a time of a new departure in our missionary history. The principal challenge of the Spiritan Year, in our common view, is to rediscover our spiritual inspiration - the intuitions and charism of our founders - with a view to actualising it in our day, to "responding creatively to the needs of evangelisation of our times"2. This has sometimes been referred to as "refounding" a religious Congregation and the spirit of this movement is well captured in the cover picture on the documents of the Maynooth Chapter: a boat modeled on a similar vessel constructed many centuries previously, setting out on a similar goal - a pilgrimage for Christ - but in a different era, in different waters, with a different wind and a different crew.



Delegates showing their approval

2. Need for Renewal and Conversion

The Superior General in his report to the EGC, while acknowledging the many positive developments in the Congregation of recent years, stressed the need for renewal and conversion. A number of the orientations that emerged both in the responses to the preparatory questionnaire and during the discussions in Pittsburgh remphasised this conviction:

- A new style of mission (presence, proximity, solidarity with the poor....) requires a new spirituality/inspiration. This is evident from the very terms used to describe mission in the text of Maynooth: pilgrimage, contemplation, and discovery of the action of the Spirit³. It is also clear from the context of contemporary mission: the lack of a supportive faith environment in many of the older circumscriptions, violence and conflict in several countries where our confreres live and work.
- International living was acknowledged by Maynooth, and confirmed by the experiences shared at the EGC, as presenting particular challenges and difficulties⁴.

Living in international communities from the point of view of witness is a test of the authenticity of the mission we preach to others⁵: respect for the profound dignity of every human person and the fundamental equality of all, openness to other cultures in respect and love. This requires the ability to transcend human limitations and to see each other with the eyes of the Spirit.

- *Vocations:* there is a growing realization in the Congregation that, in so far as vocations are concerned, perhaps the single most important consideration is the authenticity of our lifestyle and witness⁶.
- Formation: it was acknowledged that the quality of formation depends to a very significant extent on the quality of life of the formators themselves. Formators should embody the charism of the Congregation and

should be role models who can truly inspire the students they seek to form.

• Finance: we need to rediscover a simple lifestyle7; perhaps too much money rather than too little has contributed to a growing individualism in the Congregation and an emphasis on self-fulfillment. There is a need on the part of all of us for a change of mentality, a need to learn how to live simply again if we are to be really close to the poor whom we are called to serve⁸. A call for the sharing of resources in a badly divided world must be accompanied by a similar sharing within the Congregation itself between those who have and those who do not have.

3. Success of the Spiritan Year

The purpose of the forthcoming Spiritan Year is not so much to recall a glorious past as to prepare ourselves to face the future with a renewed inspiration after the mind of the deepest intuitions of our founders. In our many-facetted preparations for the celebration of this year it is vital, therefore, that we do not lose sight of its primary aim: the renewal of the Congregation to which we have dedicated our lives. In the final analysis, the success of the Spiritan Year will not be measured by the quality or quantity of the celebrations but by the degree to which this renewal has become a reality.

4. Spiritan Historical Pilgrimage

Maynooth requested that a feasibility study be undertaken by the Province of France, in conjunction with the Generalate, into the possibility of a Spiritan Historical Pilgrimage in the steps of our founders, which would be open to the friends and benefactors of the Spiritan family, and adapted to the linguistic needs of the different groups⁹. The results of this study were presented at the

EGC and there was general support for the proposal of the Province of France, namely a seven-day pilgrimage for 150 participants, visiting principally Saverne, Pinterville, Amiens and Rennes in three separate language groups, with a time together at Chevilly at the beginning and at the end.

In view of the favourable opinion expressed at the EGC, we have formally decided to proceed with the organisation of the pilgrimage; the timing will coincide with the original date of the founding of the Congregation, namely, 27th May 2003. We see it as an important event to mark the Spiritan Year, symbolic of the missionary pilgrimage of the entire Congregation in fidelity to the spirit and intuitions of our founders, offering the possibility of spiritual renewal to those who participate and through them to the various circumscriptions they represent. The General Council endorses the view expressed at Duquesne that participation be organised on a representative basis, the participants being designated by the sending circumscriptions, possibly on a regional basis. In order to minimise the financial difficulties that participation might pose for some circumscriptions, it is suggested that the expenses be shared by all circumscriptions on the basis of perequation, as is the current practice for General Chapters and other such meetings. We appreciate that the organisation of the pilgrimage will entail a considerable investment in time and energy for the Province of France and we express our sincere gratitude to them for accepting this service for the entire Congregation.

cant figures in our history and be presented in thematic form or with a thematic index. In the meantime, a copy of the texts compiled to date will be circulated to all houses of formation as useful resource material.

6. Material Resources

Many circumscriptions and Regions are well-advanced in their preparations for celebration of our forthcoming anniversaries. Programmes, retreats, seminars, local pilgrimages, promotional literature etc. have been planned and prepared with an emphasis on collaboration with the local Church and on the inclusion of all: the old and the young, confreres who are ill, our families, associates and friends. Some of the material resources produced at the local level will have an interest for the wider Congregation and all circumscriptions have been requested to make these available to the History and Anniversaries office at the Generalate for distribution to those who might wish to use this material. Of particular interest will be a set of 3 CD-Roms currently being prepared in the Region of Europe with information and photographs of historical sites associated with our origins and with material for animating pilgrimages, prayer-groups etc. Copies of these will be sent to all circumscriptions. In addition, at the sugestion of the EGC, a booklet comprising liturgical suggestions and texts for the celebration of the principal Spiritan feastdays is being prepared for distribution to all circumscriptions.

5. Publications

In accordance with the directive of the two previous General Chapters¹⁰ a number of Spiritan publications have been undertaken with our anniversaries in mind. A pictorial Spiritan Album covering 300 years of Spiritan history has been produced in three languages and is an excellent resource for the forthcoming Spiritan Year. A Diary for the Congregation is nearing completion and will be circulated to all confreres in time for the celebra-

tion of our anniversaries; it indicates events of historical significance for each day of the year and includes a short inspirational text taken from the writings of various Spiritans over the years. A critical biography of Francis Libermann has been commissioned and, although the two confreres who accepted to co-author this production have unusually busy schedules, we are still hopeful that it will appear in print during the Spiritan Year. In addition, a thesaurus of some 55 texts relevant to the personality and work of Francis Libermann has also been compiled. In accordance with the views expressed at the EGC, it is intended to produce a more complete Spiritan anthology in due course, which will include extracts from the writings of Claude Poullart des Places and other signifi-



A time of prayer

7. With the power of the Spirit

Following suggestions put forward at the EGC, we have sought to capture the spirit and the challenge of the Spiritan Year in a logo¹¹ combined with the following theme/slogan: With the power of the Spirit. At a time of a new departure in our history as a missionary religious congregation, of a renewed call to leave the security of the past behind and reach out to new missionary frontiers in the spirit of our founders, we embark on the journey in a spirit of confidence and hope with the certitude that the Spirit goes before us and accompanies us on our way. The celebration of our past will help us to rediscover that our beginnings were very humble indeed, both in the

Congregation of the Holy Spirit and in that of the Holy Heart of Mary, but that with limited resources much is possible if it is inspired by a listening heart that is open to the voice and the power of the Spirit. We will discover that at many points in our history the Holy Spirit, who, after all is the protagonist of mission, accomplished wonders through human weakness with men and women who were open to his action.



With the power of the Spirit

Dans la force de l'Esprit

Na força do Espírito

Other questions that arose at Pittsburgh

International and intercultural community life

This was not on the agenda of the Enlarged Council but it emerged as a major concern in the exchanges between participants. It returned in several debates, especially those concerning formation, community life, interdependence and solidarity in matters of personnel and finance. The General Council realises the importance of this question for our mission today and it intends to publish an I/D in the coming months on the subject.

Integrity in relationships and ministry

One area of special concern that emerged during the final days of the EGC discussions was that of inappropriate sexual conduct on the part of a small number of confreres. This has given rise to deep hurt and suffering for the victims of such behaviour in the first instance, but also within the Church and within the Congregation. It has likewise made special demands on leadership in that superiors sometimes do not feel adequately equipped to deal with such situations, particularly in the complexity of intercultural settings. It was pointed out that as the legal situation varies from one country to another, it is difficult to have an overall policy for the Congregation in this area. Procedures, especially for situations where minors are involved, are normally worked out at the level of the local Episcopal Conference or the Conference of Religious Superiors; is it essential that every circumscription has such procedures and adheres to them should a particular case arise. There was general agreement, however, that the General Council should circulate to all confreres some guidelines on the question of integrity in relationships and ministry, by way of a pastoral reflection. The Council intends to take up this

recommendation in consultation with a number of people who have experience in this field both within and outside the Congregation.

Frequency of General Chapters

At present, General Chapters take place every six years and this in turn means that the mandate of the Superior General and his Council lasts for the same period of time (SRL 213). Such a frequency of Chapters (and Enlarged General Councils) is expensive and not necessarily needed. Moreover, a mandate of six years is rather too short to permit an unhurried visit to all the circumscriptions by the General Council, and, on the other hand, twelve years is too long for those who are asked to serve for two terms. The EGC gave wide support to a suggestion that the period be extended to eight or nine years. The Superior General and his Council would have a mandate of the same length but non-renewable. The proposal will be submitted to the next General Chapter for a decision.

Date and place of the next General Chapter

A majority of the Enlarged Council felt that the Chapter should take place between mid-June and mid-July, 2004. The following criteria were considered to be the most important for choosing the location: the cost, the symbolic value of the place, accessibility (visas and journeys) and a sufficient capacity for receiving a large number of confreres. In the light of this advice and of concrete suggestions made by the assembly, the General Council has started a preliminary feasibility study with 5 circumscriptions (Portugal, France, EAP, Kenya and Nigeria).

cf. Maynooth 8.1.

² SRL 2

³ Maynooth 2.3 Introduction.

⁴ Maynooth 4.6 Introduction.

⁵ SRL 24.

⁶ "The witness of life has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching." [Evangelii Nuntiandi, 76].

⁷ Maynooth 6.1 Introduction.

⁸ SRL 24.1.

⁹ Maynooth 8.7.

¹⁰ Itaici 41; Maynooth 8.4.

The logo was designed by a young Portuguese confrere, Victor Narciso Martins da Silva.



INFORMATION DOCUMENTATION

C.S.Sp - Clivo di Cinna, 195 - 00136 Roma Italia

General Council

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INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNITY LIFE

1. A new look for our family

The Maynooth Chapter pointed out that "circumscriptions are developing that are smaller than in the past. There are many of them, spread over all continents and they are nearly all becoming international" (7.2.1). This implies the transformation and eventual disappearance of the old "national" Districts and the birth of international apostolic groups, which are small and, in the initial stages, depend directly on the General Council. Gradually, our family is taking on a new look: international and intercultural community life, presence in all the continents and an increasing preponderance of confreres from the south.

• A multicultural character

Our Congregation was born in Europe. The missionaries of Poullart des Places set out for North America, Asia and the coast of West Africa (1778). Under the influence of François Libermann, Africa became the special focus of our mission and over the last few decades, our spiritan family has put down deep roots in this continent. Spiritans arrived in Brazil in 1885 and in recent years we have spread into other Latin-American countries. Our long-standing commitments in the islands of the Indian Ocean (Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion) and our more recent arrival in several countries in Oceania and Asia have opened the doors of these two continents for us. We are now present in all five continents.

Our witness has drawn young people to our family from nearly all the continents, people of different races and cultures. The Congregation

has consequently set up structures that enable Spiritans from different countries to preserve their own identity, develop their own organisation and leaders and have their own means of formation. We also continue to put down roots in those places to which we are sent. Our continuing presence and closeness to the people adds weight to the witness we give. Living amongst other people, particularly the less fortunate, leads to our mutual enrichment. This is where our sense of the universal takes on flesh.

• The road to internationality

As missionaries sent to "those who have not yet heard the Gospel message", to "those oppressed and most disadvantaged" and to those places "where the Church has difficulty in finding workers" (SRL 12), it has always been expected of Spiritans that they break out of their own frontiers as they move towards other people. In this sense, "the Congregation has always had an international character" (General Chapter 1980, no 201) and there have always been Spiritans of different nationalities working side by side.

Since the 1968 Chapter, successive General Councils have moved in the direction of international groups in order to respond to new missionary commitments. The concept of "internationality" has become a leitmotiv in the documents of the Congregation since 1974 and two documents in particular (I/Ds of September 1977 and February 1983) aimed specifically at making confreres familiar with this concept. Some international groups were set up, like those of Paraguay, Pakistan and Southern Ethiopia.

Since the 90s, several circumscriptions have become increasingly international by necessity, because of the lack of vocations in the provinces of origin and the availability of confreres coming from the south. But it is also something we are doing by choice: today, international and intercultural living is our progressive aim.

• The current situation

In recent years, there has been a marked growth in international and intercultural communities, as can be seen clearly in the table below:

International apostolic groups	Ethiopia, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Mozambique, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, Taiwan, Australia, Croatia, Mexico, Paraguay	Involving 150 Spiritans
International foundations	North-West Africa (FANO), Southern Africa (SCAF), Democratic Republic of Congo, Indian Ocean (FOI), Haiti, Puerto Rico	Involving 154 Spiritans
Largely international Districts	Madagascar, Mauritius, South Africa, Guyane, Amazonia	Involving 97 Spiritans
Largely international Provinces	Central Africa (PAC), East Africa (EAP), West Africa (WAP), Angola, Brazil	Involving 610 Spiritans
Districts with confreres from elsewhere	Cape Verde, Kenya, The Gambia, Reunion	Involving 90 Spiritans
Provinces with confreres from elsewhere	France, Spain, Ireland, England, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, Holland, TransCanada, Canada, USA East & West, Nigeria	

From this, we can see that more and more confreres are being drawn into international and intercultural community life. It effects nearly every circumscription and is continuing to grow despite some initial reticence. The Congregation has freely opted for this development, but it is, above all, the fruit of the evolution of the world and society.

Twenty Spiritans replied to the questionnaire that was sent to them; we print below some extracts from their replies and relevant quotations from documents of the Congregation.

2.1 Benefits and advantages for mission and life together

A sign of catholicity in the local Churches
 The presence of an international religious institute in a local Church brings a certain

catholicity and universality which helps it to enter more fully into the total ambit of the worldwide Church. The present emphasis on the local Church brings with it the risk of these same Churches turning in on themselves; as witnesses to universality, we can help these ecclesial communities to have a wider vision of the Church's universality.

• The prophetic witness of charity

"Experience has led many confreres to the conviction that the practice of internationality in communities, circumscriptions and regions has a special evangelical and apostolic value". Therefore, the General Council "encourages an openness to internationality, which is a witness to brotherhood and community" (Directory for Organisation nos. 21 and 11). "In our world, where people seem to be more and more suspicious and fearful of others, and erect more and more barriers to keep others out, the witness

value of people from different cultures living together 'in one heart and spirit' is itself a very concrete living out of the Kingdom of God' (S.L. Taiwan). "I found that visitors to our community appreciated the cultural diversity in our lives. I think they saw it not so much as a witness to cross-cultural living but rather as an illustration of how we, as Spiritans, are both the same and different" (P.L. South Africa).

• The possibility of a deeper inculturation

The fact that we belong to different cultures invites us to go beyond a cultural and religious ethnocentrism and to immerse ourselves into a knowledge of the local people and their culture. In this way, we can come closer to the people, integrate with the local Church and avoid creating "replica mission Churches, i.e. an American Church, an Irish Church, a French Church. International living expresses

in a very concrete way the catholicity of the Church" (P.A. EAP).

• A blessing and a path to freedom

"Internationality is a great blessing. We start with almost nothing in common between us and gradually, we construct a community together as we all strive to serve the people to whom we are sent. I don't know how to describe or explain it, but I am convinced that internationality makes us free: free to build human relations, based on our service of the people rather than on our feelings; free to find new ways of communicating; free to invent new rituals of friendship. Certainly,

one has to work hard to deepen one's relationships with others, but the effort brings many rewards" (P.J. Paraguay).

• International living encourages solidarity within the Congregation

"The more we have confreres coming from different places, the more we build up our ties with different circumscriptions. And the Provinces and Foundations become supportive of the groups and concerned for their future. This has the practical effect of an increased sharing of information, more material help and appointment of new conferers. As a consequence, our own vision expands: we have a wider appreciation of what is happening throughout the Congregation and feel more concerned with the problems of other circumscriptions" (M.T. Pakistan).

• A richer and more dynamic mission

"Our mission - what we are, what we are doing and why we are doing it - is greatly enriched by our different but complementary points of view and pastoral approaches" (Amazonia). Small, international groups help our missionary undertakings to be more sensitive to the culture of the people where we are working, more dynamic, inventive and adapted to different and changing situations. (cf. Directory for Organisation nos. 5 & 11).



Téfé, Amazonia: 12 confreres from 6 different countries

• A sign of the times: witness to unity

There is much emphasis today on interdependence and we tend more and more to think globally. Life in circumscriptions and communities which are mainly international and intercultural appears as a clear sign of the times and as a way forward which is in consonance with the Gospel and our mission. It is a witness to fraternity and communion, a witness to the reality of Pentecost, a witness to unity in diversity (cf. Directory for Organisation no. 11).

2.2 Benefits for the individual

On-going personal assessment

International community forces us to assess ourselves constantly, to discuss and to remain 'disturbed' in the best sense of the word (M.T. Pakistan). "We look on our differences as a benefit and we scrutinise our own ideas and convictions which were sometimes formed without serious reflection" (Mexico).

Personal growth

"I found a greater tolerance developing in myself, not just towards others from different cultures but also with those of my own culture...There has been a widening of my horizons; I have learnt that the way I was brought up is not the only valid way of authentically living out the Christian vocation" (P.L. South Africa).



Puerto Rico: 8 Confreres from 3 different countries

"Living in an international community forces one to face up to oneself and the habits and values one has developed; ...learning how other people live and think leads to personal growth because it makes us look again at our own accepted ways of thinking and acting" (V.S. Ethiopia).

Personal benefits

"We learn tolerance and love of the other person by respecting and accepting people as they are with all their differences. We learn the different worldviews, values, attitudes, beliefs

and behaviour within the different cultures and nations of the Congregation" (P.A. EAP).

Transformed by knowing others

"It is fascinating to learn other cultures, other languages, other oral traditions ...and this is essential for maintaining peace in an intercultural community. And by making this effort, we ourselves are transformed" (B.D. France).

3. Challenges in international and intercultural communities

If the benefits and advantages of international communities are clear to see, it is important, on the other hand, not to underestimate the problems that they can bring. It calls for a determined spirit of sacrifice, detachment and conversion. To bring about such a conversion, we need to dig deep into our charism, build up a mutual trust and cultivate a permanent availability. The confreres consulted

saw things in this way:

• Living in international communities is a task and a mystery

"As every Spiritan can witness, living in community is not easy and living in an international community is not a solution towards the making of an 'ideal community' which can never exist" (S.L. Taiwan). "International communities leads us "to feel, to understand and to experience the deep differences between confreres of different backgrounds; it also teaches us that we can never fully understand all that goes into making up our relationships - there is always an element of mystery in it... So this sort of commu-

nity life is like a laboratory, or a whole package of experiences where we can continue to prepare ourselves for our on-going missionary role" (M.T. Pakistan).

Awareness of cultural differences

Each of us has his own way of living and thinking, fashioned by his own culture. Cultural characteristics, which continue to influence us despite superficial changes, differ considerably from one culture to another. For example, the way we understand and live out our religious poverty, our use of money and means of communication, can be very different

and potentially disruptive. (P.L. South Africa; B.D. France). While identifying these cultural and religious differences, are we able to see them as sources of mutual benefit? And are we sufficiently open and available to allow ourselves to be challenged by each other and thereby grow in our understanding of our spiritan charism?

• Rooted in our own culture

It is not possible for us to cross frontiers if we are not, first of all, deeply rooted in our own culture, if we do not have a direct interest in it and a certain insertion in the local Church from which we come. We have to appreciate our own culture if we want to be open to the culture of others. "It would certainly be unrealistic to think in terms of an internationality that would exclude that indispensable rooting in a particular culture in a circumscription of origin, with all the ties that are implicit in that concept. Different cultural and ecclesial gifts are of great value to the Congregation. The difficult task is to achieve a balance between preserving one's roots and, at the same time, being open to internationality" (Directory for Organisation no. 22).



Paraguay: 16 Confreres from 10 different countries

Develop a constructive attitude

Life in an international community helps us to appreciate the values that others have adopted and to be open up to new horizons and perspectives. This teaches us to be more tolerant and patient with other people and to be aware of our own weaknesses. In such communities, each one is expected to contribute his own

talents and experience and, at the same time, learn from the others. (S.L. Taiwan).

Overcoming prejudices

On joining an international community, we inevitably bring with us some fixed ideas and judgements, as well as our own limited experience of this world. "Prejudice comes from a lack of reliable information and prevents authentic encounter" (Ejisu, Ghana). "We find it difficult in such communities not to seek to dominate others, or make judgements based on our previous personal experiences. There are some who regard themselves as infallible in community" (P.C. Haiti). But trust and fraternity will grow if we let them; working together in the service of the poor, following the same pattern of life in community - and even the passing of time - all help us to open up to one another in a spirit of confidence, brotherhood and mutual help.

• Individual characters

Some said that life in international communities is no more difficult than those in which everybody is of the same culture. Tensions can arise in any community, including those

of national groups or where all come from the same circumscription. In general, friction is much more likely to be the result of incompatible characters living together than of the presence of different cultures - or at least they can begin for reasons of incompatibility and then deteriorate further because of the difference of cultures. The character of individuals can build up or destroy the spirit of any

community (B.D. France; P.J. Paraguay).

Some hesitations regarding international groups

Most confreres today are prepared to live in international and intercultural communities, but there are still some with reservations. They feel they are not necessary, that one should not seek out avoidable difficulties, or they feel that they have not been prepared for such an experience. Others will say that living with foreigners increases community tensions, makes agreement difficult and results in pastoral work being less successful. It is true that at times we all feel tired, but that is part of any community living. There can also be a fear that one's autonomy and security will be threatened. But such difficulties simply underline the importance of not bringing a rigid ideology to such communities and show the need for careful individual and collective preparation in view of the demands that are inherent in the experience (Directory for Organisation no. 21).

4. Clarification of certain points

Despite all that has been said above, there remain some very real problems regarding international

groups that need to be clarified:

Finance

This is an important and sometimes worrying area regarding international groupings which, at times, can be a source of tension and conflict. For example, where some members of the group have access to financial resources from friends or from their Provinces of origin while others have nothing, it can lead to resentment and feelings of inequality. Our Rule of Life asks us to share all we have (SRL 65); the Directory for Organi-

sation adds that "any direct financial aid will be given to the Group as a whole, not to individual confreres" (no. 64). Obviously, every member has to gave financial support to the Group if the necessary means are available to him. In this delicate area, transparency, co-responsibility and equality must guide our actions; the principle of the "common purse" is part of our Rule (no. 65).

Autonomy and interdependence

International Groups are in the front line of our mission which calls for creativity, autonomy and stability. It needs young, well-motivated members. But sometimes, these Groups can be very fragile.

The policy of our Congregation is to encourage their autonomy and responsibility, both as regards their apostolic work and their human and financial resources: "Circumscriptions which are fully international have need for structures which will ensure their stability" (Directory for Organisation 23). From the juridical point of view, every group which has its own major superior has the autonomy of a circumscription. But very often, they need the support of the whole Congregation, either because they are operating in poor countries or because they still have few local members. But this must not lead to a situation of dependence in the Congregation, since we all need each other (for personnel and finance) and we are jointly responsible for the whole of our spiritan mission.

The ties that each Spiritan has with his circum-



Philippines-Taiwan: 11 confreres from 9 different countries

scription of origin roots him in a particular family, group and Church. But this must not prevent his total commitment to the circumscription to which he is appointed. It is there that we carry out our missionary vocation and experience a new fraternity; it is there that we answer a new call to solidarity with another group in a local Church. The circumscription of appointment has its independence from the one from which it was born. We are expected to take up our share of responsibility in this missionary field and to place our trust in this new solidarity. So if the question arises of the possible transfer of a confrere back to his circumscription of origin, there must be a dialogue

between the two superiors concerned to ensure that these international groups should not be weakened. If necessary, recourse can be had to the General Council.

Solidarity in the Congregation

It is a part of our family feeling that we should aim at an equality amongst us that will allow all to live with dignity. The Rule of Life asks all circumscriptions to contribute what they can spare and even what they still need. We are reminded that all our material goods are at the service of our mis-

sion (SRL 72). The Maynooth Chapter encouraged the setting up of partnerships between circumscriptions and asked "the General Council to supervise, organise and direct the solidarity between all circumscriptions" (6.7) and to organise fund raising at the level of the whole Congregation. Following on the

Enlarged Council at Pittsburgh, the General Council took steps to find new resources. All this assumes that we manage carefully the goods we already have and that our lifestyle is "simple and modest", bringing us closer to the poor whom we are called to serve (SRL 71).

The role of the General Council

Unity and solidarity within our Congregation remain crucial. The role of the General Council is to watch over the sharing of our human and financial resources, direct and coordinate our spiritan mission (above all that of the weaker groups) and to instill our life and mission with the spiritan charism. In fact, the Maynooth Chapter asked for more attention and intervention from the General Council regarding initial formation, the solidarity of the Congregation and new missionary engagements (mainly international).

5. Looking to the future

Some confreres have asked for a guide for living in international communities, so we end with a few suggestions in that direction:

• Initial formation should prepare confreres for international/intercultural living

- Each should be given the possibility of doing part of his formation in an international community. Young confreres could be exchanged between the different formation centres.



EAP: 155 Confreres from 10 different countries

- Everybody should have a period of "stage" during training; this should be programmed to give experience of working in an international/intercultural setting, where language learning would be given high priority.
- Learning other languages should be encouraged.
- Where possible, international meetings of young Spiritans in training should be organised.
- In formation programmes, the charism and spirituality of the Congregation will be included.
- Some suggestions for life in international communities

Here is a selection of suggestions made by confreres:

- An effort should be made by all to speak a common language, preferably that of the country where the community is situated; this can be a great help towards binding the confreres together.
- Where there is a predominance of confreres from one particular cultural background, the unconscious tendency is to impose their way of seeing things, leaving little space for the sensi-

tivities of others. It is preferable for there to be a balance of nationalities and cultures within the same group.

- It is important that the culture of reference for the community should be that of the country in which it exists. Internationality needs to be "situated", i.e. lived with the people of the local Church, otherwise the group will continue to be something foreign.
- Communication is important for any group, but when
- the group is international, it becomes crucial. It must be remembered that some cultures are very reserved when it comes to one's personal life.
- It is desirable that from the start, the community should reach an agreement regarding pocket money: clarity in this area is of great importance (SRL 69).
- Provinces and Foundations of origin should keep close links with confreres who have been appointed to an international community, especially if they are the only ones from their circumscription.
- Superiors have a particularly important role in such international groups; they need to visit the confreres, pay attention to the individual, promote unity and on-going formation and look after the organisation.

- Opportunities for common reflection and sharing must be created: Confreres should be encouraged to know each other well, evaluate the direction the community is taking, analyse and deepen the pastoral work, pray together, create friendship.
- Organise celebration of feast days and national holidays, community outings, cultural meetings etc.



Taiwan: 5 Confreres from 4 different countries

- Be able to offer the new arrivals a good community atmosphere, time for learning the local language and culture and for getting to know the local Church and people.

Conclusion

This internationality that is being lived by an ever-growing number of Spiritans calls for an increase in solidarity, a genuine sharing of goods and a greater concern for one another. Life in international and intercultural communities will be a distinguishing feature of our Congregation in the years to come.

The present movement of globilisation tends to reduce everything to the same level and leave a "tabula rasa" in the place of cultural diversity. Our way of living should be a counter-witness to this, supporting and respecting different peoples and cultures, both in our place of origin and in the country where we live out our missionary commitment.

A LOYE THAT IS GENUINE

(1Jn 3,18)

A CALL TO INTEGRITY IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS



Introduction

The celebration of the anniversaries of our Congregation touches each one of us profoundly. It makes us long to live out the inspiration of our founders and of the Spiritans who have gone before us, in all its fullness. But such a desire inevitably implies facing up to the truth, for without this, the inspiration is in danger of remaining

no more than a sterile dream. At the Enlarged General Council in Pittsburgh, we were warned of the need to reflect on the authenticity of our affective lives today; this paper is an attempt to help us in our search for the truth. What is at stake is not simply a secondary

aspect of our religious missionary life; it concerns something at the deepest level of our being – our capacity to love, which implies an experience of being loved and the capacity to confide.

The quality of our love is revealed in the quality of our relationships, whether in our community life or in our ministry as witnesses to the Gospel. Our recent Chapters have stressed the importance of our religious life, lived in intercultural community, and of our mission in transcultural situations as a presence amongst people, as dialogue and solidarity and as a witness to mutual friendship, sharing and collaboration.

This new emphasis in our life and our mission makes it more important than ever that we be transparent and honest in our human relationships. To love in truth is now a challenge for every Spiritan.

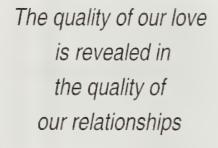
Consecrated Life: A Challenge to the Contemporary World

The Gift of Ourselves

Our Spiritan Rule of Life expresses in a concise but profound way the inspiration behind the consecration we made of ourselves on the day of our profession (SRL 50-54). Like all baptised Christians

we have been called to a life of love and holiness, to carry on Christ's mission in the Church, and to bear witness in the world to his values and his message. The call we received to the religiousapostolic way of life is a special gift of the Holy Spirit, inviting us to give ourselves completely in the

Congregation to the service of God's people. Recognising this gift and wishing to respond with wholeheartedness, in spite of our human limitations, we committed ourselves by a public and definitive act to a life of chastity, poverty and obedience, in order to witness to the Kingdom of God in our world. Our religious consecration is a journey of discovery: despite moments of weakness and doubt, we gradually come to know that God's love can indeed fulfill all our desires, we learn to let go of our inborn longings for possessions and power and we experience a new freedom to serve God and our brothers and sisters. It is also fundamentally a journey of conversion, if we are to try to live fully for the Lord and for the people he has called us to serve (Vita Consecrata 35). In that sense, therefore, it is a gift of ourselves which, though made once and for all on the day of our profession has be to renewed out hiday at our lives. in faithful response to our vocation.





Prophetic Witness

A fundamental aspect of our religious commitment is its prophetic character in the contemporary world. We are called to witness by our words and by our lives to the primacy of Gospel values and to challenge all that is contrary to God's vision of our world, where the poor have a special place. If prophecy is to be truly persuasive our lives must be in harmony with the message we proclaim. In every age, the three evangelical counsels radically challenge the values of contemporary society. They give a special insight into the inherent goodness in human sexuality, the legitimate desire to possess material goods and to make decisions for oneself. Faithfully lived, they challenge the perennial tendency to dissociate these values from our responsibility to our brothers and sisters.

Challenge of Consecrated Chastity

The joyful living of the vow of chastity, in particular, challenges everything that would evaluate love at less than its true worth. The modern world rightly

emphasises many positive aspects of human life and existence hitherto neglected or undervalued. In particular, it stresses the inherent goodness and beauty of the world and the human body, the primacy of the individual human person and their right and freedom to control their own destiny. However, this has given rise to a pervasive world culture where the

pursuit of pleasure is seen as an end in itself. Sexuality is taken out of the context of human wholeness and is reduced to an object of personal satisfaction; it is divorced from commitment and interpersonal responsibility, without reference to any objective criteria, religious or secular. Sexuality has consequently been elevated to an inordinate degree and has become a means of domination, exploitation and depersonalization of others, rather than an expression of mutual self-giving in loving communion. The erotic pervades the cinema, music and the press and conveys the message that sexual experience, centred on the needs and rights of the individual, is essential to the ruit development or the human person.

Consecrated chastity, joyfully lived, fundamentally challenges this view and witnesses to the possibility of living a full and balanced human life in the celibate state, with the power of God's love. It becomes all the more convincing when our lives give evident witness to our unselfish love for every individual person, independent of their social and cultural background, religion or status, and our commitment to the promotion of their human dignity.

Honesty and Integrity in Our Relationships

The quiet testimony of a faithfully lived commitment to consecrated chastity is offered to everyone – young people, engaged couples, husbands and wives – and "meets a growing need for interior honesty in human relationships" (VC 88), as indeed does a life of faithful commitment in Christian marriage. Clearly, if this is to be effective, if we are really to witness to the fact that the power of God's love can accomplish great things within the

context of human love, our own lives must be beyond reproach. Inappropriate relationships with women, with other men and worse still with minors, greatly undermine this fundamental message of a life that professes to conform to Gospel values. In addition to eroding our own sense of personal fulfillment in the way of life we have chosen, such relationships cause se-

rious and lasting damage to the individuals concerned. The recent scandals that have emerged in the Church in regard to the immoral behaviour of some clergy and religious have deeply affected our credibility and, regrettably, our own Congregation has not been immune from these accusations. The situation has been compounded by evidence of mismanagement and, in cases, of cover up on the part of some entrusted with the responsibility of leadership. Many perceive these transgressions as a serious abuse of the power we have in virtue of our position and a fundamental betrayal of the sacred trust upon which our ministry is built. We are called more than ever to honesty, transparency, humility and conversion.

If prophecy is to be
truly persuasive
our lives must be
in harmony with
the message we proclaim



Treasure in Earthen Vessels

Obviously the fact that we have committed ourselves to a life of consecrated chastity in the celibate state does not remove our natural human tendencies or our need for human affection, fulfillment and intimacy. In addition, we are all deeply affected - perhaps more than we would care to admit - by the prevailing philosophies of our times. We remain fragile people who carry a treasure in earthen vessels. While we rely on God's power at work in our human weakness, as in all walks of life, prudence, self-discipline and self-denial are essential for achieving personal integration and maturity. Moreover, we are called as professional people, with privileged access to the intimate details of other people's lives, to the highest standards of ethical practice.

Personal communion with God in listening

to his Word, in daily meditation and prayer, is at the heart of our calling and an indispense of supporting us on our journey. "True prophecy is born of God, from friendship with him, from listening to His Word"

We are called as professional people to the highest standards of ethical practice

(VC 84). The celebration of the Eucharist, the "source and summit of Spiritan living" (SRL 93) and the frequentation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation are essential sources of nourishment and renewal (SRL 93, 95).

- A spiritual director, soul-friend or spiritual companion is of invaluable assistance in enabling us to see ourselves objectively and to evaluate our relationships and the motivations behind them (cf. Maynooth 3.2). This should be a normal part of every Spiritan's spiritual journey.
- The importance of genuine community living, where each confrere feels a sense of belonging, acceptance, appreciation and support, cannot be overstated in the context of our emotional line and arrective needs.

- True friendships, both within the Congregation and with laymen and women, are signs of the love and affection that existed between Jesus and his closest followers. They help us to develop our personality to its full potential in addition to supporting us in our life and ministry (SRL 59.2).
- A balanced lifestyle between work, prayer and recreation, where due attention is given to caring for one's physical and emotional health, is very important for a well-adjusted personality.
- Aware of the power that we exercise, often unconsciously, over people in our pastoral care, we must always be careful to maintain clear boundaries in our relationships. In particular, we must refrain from exploiting the trust and dependency of others, not

using them to satisfy our personal needs for acceptance, affection and intimacy.

• Boundary violations are committed when we knowingly or unknowingly cross the emotional, physical or sexual limits of another person. Since these vary from culture to culture, it is imperative for us as missionar-

ies in transcultural situations to familiarise ourselves with the norms of acceptable behaviour in the cultural context in which we are called to live and work.

Formation

Contemporary Context

Candidates for the Spiritan life are a gift from the Lord, which we welcome with gratitude (SRL 103). From a wide variety of cultural backgrounds they bring with them qualities and talents that enrich the Congregation and they continue to inspire the Spiritan family with their enthusiasm and generosity. However, as belonging to a particular age they also carry with them the fragilities of the young people of their times. Formatois and



spiritual directors are entrusted with the responsibility of assisting them to discern and respond freely to the call addressed to them by Christ; they assist those called to the Spiritan way of life to grow progressively in the total gift of themselves in his footsteps. In the contemporary context this is a particularly demanding, if rewarding, task. Those who seek to join us today are often marked by the effects of a pervasively permissive mentality in the area of sexuality and relationships and an understanding of personal freedom that challenges the foundations upon which religious life is based.

Some carry with them the scars of broken family relationships and the hurt of rejection, perhaps even abuse, in the family circle. Against this background the importance of adequate human and spiritual formation cannot be overstressed in the preparation for a life of total consecration to God, freely and joyfully

The importance of adequate human and spiritual formation cannot be overstressed

made, in the service of the poor and abandoned.

Fundamental Orientations

Formation is primarily the work of God who calls us into his service to follow him, to imitate him and to allow ourselves to be transformed by him. A candidate for Spiritan life who enters into a formation programme accepts to be guided in the response he wants to give to the calling he has received. He is helped by those with greater experience in the Spiritan life to better understand his own call and to respond to it according to his own human and spiritual history; in this way he effectively learns to form himself. The action of the formator must therefore be at the service of the action of God and the free will of the individual that God desires to form (GSF 9,10).

• Openness, trust and transparency on the part of the student in relating to formators and spiritual directors are indispensable if the formation process is to achieve its purpose. The members of the formation team can do much to create such a climate trainer are available or addition, are good

listeners and foster an atmosphere of fraternal simplicity, liberty and realism in the community.

• In an age when the call to authenticity is one of the signs of the times (Evangelii Nuntiandi 76), the personal witness and quality of life of the formator himself are of paramount importance. This has serious implications for those responsible for the selection and appointment of confreres to the formation ministry and for the formators

themselves, whose personal integrity should be beyond question. Notwithstanding their human limitations, they should give evident witness to joy and fulfillment in the faithful living out of their own commitment. While this may apply in a special way to the members of the formation team and to the other

Spiritans resident in the formation community, it is also applicable in fact to all confreres who should inspire their younger brothers by the way they live.

- Formators and spiritual directors should be familiar with the various aspects and stages of the development of the human person, especially in the psychological area. As indicated in the Spiritan Guide for Formation (GSF 25), it is very useful if at least one formator in each circumscription has a more specialised training in this field, from which the other formators can profit.
- testing is a valuable tool in vocational discernment, when carried out by a qualified and competent person and it should be availed of wherever possible (cf. GSF 27). While therapeutic counselling may be recommended in particular cases, clear evidence of serious personality disorders at any stage during formation should preclude further advancement in the Spiritan way of line (cr. Canon 089).



- Clear emphasis should be placed on the fact that for Spiritans the commitment to celibate chastity derives from our call to religious life; it is not simply a necessary consequence of ordination to the priesthood.
- Regular spiritual direction is indispensable throughout the Spiritan life, especially during the years of initial formation. The spiritual director has a unique role in assisting a student to reflect upon and integrate his past and present experiences and to accept and deal with his inevitable limitations, ambiguities and failures. Equally important is the development of a life of personal communion with God in prayer, who sustains us on the path to which he himself has called us. In these ways the student can gradually acquire the personal discipline necessary for a life of faithful commitment.
- True friendships are essential for a balanced personality and are a valuable source of support in our life and ministry. Students should be encouraged to develop healthy friendships within the Spiritan family and with laypeople, both men and

women, while respecting the boundaries implied by our commitment. It is very important that students be given the opportunity of normal everyday contact with lay men and women, both married and single, and that they be assisted to reflect upon and evaluate their relationships. In addition, the involvement of suitable laymen and women in the formation programme and the discernment process is very desirable, where at all possible.

• Care should be taken to ensure that the overall formation programme in a circumscription includes courses on human

- psychology and psychosexual development. Workshops/seminars etc. should also be arranged periodically with the aid of competent people to deal openly and candidly with matters related to sexuality, affectivity and relationships.
- The contemporary means of social communication offer enormous possibilities for furthering the cause of Christian mission in the world. It is important that students are introduced to these areas during their time in initial formation and that they are taught to use them with prudence and discretion. The use of the Internet calls for particular attention today.

Role and Responsibility of Confreres in Leadership

Confreres who hold positions of leadership in the Congregation have a special role and responsibility

in this whole area. As the leader and the animator of the circumscription/ community, the Superior is called to help each confrere respond faithfully to his missionary religious vocation and to lead a joyful fraternal life (cf. SRL 47) Every professed member, by virtue of his religious profession, commits himself freely to observe the Rule of Life of the

the Rule of Life of the Congregation (SRL 80). An essential aspect of leadership at all levels is to oversee fidelity to this commitment.

Challenge and Encouragement

In the first instance, this involves encouraging, assisting and, where necessary, challenging confreres to respond faithfully to their calling. In particular, Superiors should encourage confreres to adopt a balanced and regular rhythm of life, where adequate time is given to prayer, reflection and recreation in addition to work (cf. Maynooth 3.2). The findings of contemporary psychology clearly suggest that over-involvement in ministerial activity at the expense of other important aspects of a

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balanced lifestyle is not conducive to healthy living in a world that has become increasingly more complex and stressful.

- In this regard, confreres need to be made aware of their need for self-knowledge and encouraged and facilitated to take periods of renewal that permit both professional updating and genuine spiritual replenishment and, where necessary, attention to their physical well-being (cf. SRL 145).
- In addition, those in leadership should make every effort to promote a style of community living that supports the emotional life of confreres, facilitates open and trustful discussion in the delicate area of relationships and fosters a positive and joyful commitment to chastity (Maynooth 3.11, 4.11).

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Spiritan circumscription

Confreres Living Apart

Secondly, Superiors have a particular responsibility in regard to confreres living at a distance from the Congregation (Maynooth 4.19, 4.20). Such confreres include

those who do not have an official appointment from their Major Superior to their present assignment, as well as those who have distanced themselves from the life of the circumscription to which they belong and fail to participate in a minimum of activities essential to local or regional community living¹. Clearly, there may be many contributory factors that have led a confrere to live apart from the Congregation, for some of which the Congregation itself may have direct or indirect responsibility. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on all Major Superiors to make every effort to contact such confreres, to invite them to regularise their situation, to return to community living and to accept an appointment in the spirit of availability that is at the heart of the Spiritan calling. Openness, sensitivity and delicate tact are called for in dealing with confreres who have personal difficulties and adequate time must be given for dialogue, for the

repairing of broken relationships and for discernment of the future (cf. SRL 39.3). In certain cases, it may well be more judicious for Superiors to approach an individual living at a distance from the Congregation through another person who has his trust and confidence.

- However, it is imperative that such irregular situations are not allowed to continue indefinitely and, should all efforts fail to get a confrere to return to the Congregation or, alternatively, to choose freely an alternative way of life, the process of dismissal in accordance with Canons 696 and 697 should be initiated.
- Where confreres have effectively left the Congregation but have not formalised their departure, it is very important that the relevant canonical procedures for separation -

laicisation (SRL 257, 261 – 263), juridical establishment of dismissal (SRL 267, 268) - be completed. It is to be recalled that confreres are entitled to legal representation in accordance with Church law.

• In all cases, it should be borne in mind that the Congregation may be

held civilly liable for exemplary damages on the part of any member if it has neglected to implement the Spiritan Rule of Life in his regard.

Accusations of Inappropriate Behaviour

Thirdly, where an allegation of inappropriate sexual behaviour involving potential contravention of civil law on the part of a confrere is concerned, it is vital that every circumscription should have a written policy/set of procedures for dealing with such matters. Since the legal situation varies from one country to another, procedures are normally worked out at the level of the local Episcopal Conference or the Conference of Religious Superiors.

 It is essential that these or similar procedures be adopted by every Spiritan encumscription



and that they be strictly adhered to should a particular case arise. The Spiritan norms should reflect the fact that the situation of a member of a religious congregation differs in some aspects from that of a diocesan priest.

- In all cases involving an accusation of inappropriate behaviour on the part of a confrere, the Superior must ensure that the complaint is listened to fully, honestly and compassionately.
- He must equally make sure that prompt action is taken to determine the accuracy and seriousness of the complaint. An advisory panel should be set in place to assist him.

Healing and Justice for Victims

Where the evidence clearly indicates that there is substance to the accusation the Superior must have

as his first concern the care and healing of those who have been the victims of such behaviour.

• This concern requires that, in so far as possible, the potential for further offence on the part of the confrere be removed and that appropriate support and assis-

tance be offered to those who have been harmed. In certain circumstances these may include family members of the victim who have also been affected.

- Where the nature of the accusation is grave, the Superior should remove the confrere from active ministry and should obtain a professional assessment of his fitness for future restricted ministry.
- In such cases, concern for justice and healing for the victim calls for full cooperation with civil authorities and processes in accordance with local requirements. The prescriptions of civil and canon law should be carefully adhered to.²

 It is recommended that a suitable confrere be delegated by the Major Superior to deal with the juridical aspects of a case and that the latter be not directly involved at this level.

Pastoral Concern for the Accused

Superiors also have a responsibility to show pastoral concern for the care and healing of the confrere involved. Following a straightforward, open and non-accusatory exchange with him about the accusation, the confrere should be referred for appropriate psychological and spiritual guidance. A number of therapeutic centres have been established in various countries for this purpose and their services should be availed of for assessment and for subsequent treatment, where this is deemed necessary. In some circumscriptions no such facilities exist but competent and experienced professionals are available who offer this service. It is important that, in understanding with

the confrere concerned and without infringing on confidentiality, there be a clear arrangement for all relevant information to be provided to the Superior by the centre or professional engaged.

• One of the primary roles of the Superior in all these cases is to help to rebuild the personal dignity of the accused

confrere on the clear understanding that he may never be able to return to active pastoral ministry.

- In this regard it is very helpful to have a supportive Spiritan community in each circumscription, where the local Superior, and at least one other member of the community, are fully aware of the particular circumstances of the case and where the confrere can be welcomed and assisted. Superiors should also avail, where possible, of the expertise of skilled priests/religious to accompany a confrere in such a situation.
- It may be necessary in some circumscriptions to enter into dratogue with other rengious

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congregations/local ecclesiastical authorities with a view to a collaborative approach to the care and healing of priests and religious with serious difficulties in the affective/sexual area. Consideration should also be given to the training of one or other confrere in the circumscription in this specialised area.

 Should a confrere be wrongly accused of inappropriate sexual behaviour the Superior should make every effort to ensure appropriate counselling and accompaniment for him and to restore his good

It is vital that

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nature be addressed speedily,

openly and honestly

name, if the matter has come into the public domain.

- relevant information be given to the Provincial.
- In very serious cases³, the Superior General should also be informed, either directly or indirectly, through the relevant correspondent on the General Council.
 - Where necessary, Superiors should not hesitate to avail of the competencies and skills of others and to seek the assistance of a suitable professional counsellor in handling a particular situation.
 - Accurate files should be maintained to show that every reasonable care has

been taken by the Superior in dealing with the confrere in question.

Confreres with Difficulties: General Orientations

Understandably, many Superiors who have no special training or competence in these matters feel inadequately equipped to deal with such situations, particularly in the complexity of intercultural settings. However, it is vital that problems of this nature be addressed speedily, openly and honestly. Where a Superior – or indeed any confrere – has good reason to believe that another confrere has seriously violated accepted ethical standards, he has a moral obligation to take effective action without delay.

- In no case should the problem be ignored or the confrere concerned be transferred to another post or sent on sabbatical leave/ studies in the hope that the problem will solve itself.
- In general, the most appropriate place for a confrere to deal with difficulties in the area of affectivity/sexuality is in his Province of origin; this does not exclude the possibility of seeking appropriate professional help outside one's Province of origin if such assistance is not available locally.
- When a confrere with problems returns from his circumscription of appointment to his Province of origin, it is essential that all

Conclusion

Thus we discover through our community life and our witness to the Gospel, our formation and our exercise of leadership, that to love authentically inevitably involves a struggle for each one of us. But this is a struggle that is at the heart of our Christian and religious commitment, one that brings us deep and lasting joy. As St. Paul puts it: "I may speak in tongues of men or of angels, but if I have no love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal..." (1Cor 13.1).

On behalf of the General Council,

M. Carrotte

Pierre Schouver



This does not refer to confreres who, with the permission of the Superior, live alone for reasons of the apostolate and who participate in the life of their circumscription.

Sample copies of protocols in use in different circumscriptions, as well as copies of the relevant prescriptions of canon law, may be obtained, on request, from the generalate.

For instance, where a criminal proceedings have been initiated against a confrere in this area or where the future possibilities for ministry of a confrere are seriously restricted.

THE SPIRITAN YEAR

A MESSAGE TO ALL

CONFDEDES

FOR THE SDIRITAN

YEAD



WITH THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are about to embark on the celebration of key moments in the history of our Spiritan family. This special Year, decided upon by the Chapter of Maynooth, presents us with a unique opportunity for spiritual renewal. We attempt to rediscover the inspiration of our beginnings by responding creatively to the challenges of our own day. The meaning of this sort of re-foundation is encapsulated in the logo above. It refers us back to the boat of the Maynooth document, inviting us to get on board for a new voyage. The sail is filled with the breath of the Spirit. We are not leaving for a cruise among our archives; if we look back to the past, it is to prepare ourselves, with the power of the Spirit, to set out into the deep for a long journey ahead.

A storm-bound ship

"One day, Jesus got into a boat with his disciples and said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side of the lake'. So they put out; and as they sailed along, he fell asleep. Then a heavy squall struck the lake; they began to ship water and were in grave danger. They came and roused him: 'Master, Master, we are sinking!' they cried. He awoke and rebuked the turbulent waters. The storm subsided and there was calm. 'Where is your faith?', he asked" (Luke 8:22-25).

Jesus leads his disciples to the other side of the lake, which is regarded as a pagan area. In all three Synoptics, attention is focused on Jesus: he is the first to enter the boat and his

disciples follow him (Mt. 8:18-25); he invites them to launch out into the deep. When the storm is raging while he sleeps, they cry out "Master, Master", with the trust in his authority that the Greek word used implies. He shows his power and calm is restored.

The narration is a reflection of the period after the paschal events, when Jesus has passed through suffering and death to enter into the fullness of life. For Luke in the Acts. Jesus continues his presence and action through his disciples. With him, by the power of his Spirit, they too can pass through trials and become his witnesses in the worst of situations. In the same way, he will be with Paul and the other missionaries of the early days. Is he also with us? Are we ready for a new and difficult journey? Are we able to call on him with all our heart? Where is our faith?

A search for the truth

Now is the time to seek out the truth, beyond the routine and superficiality of our daily lives, and to live it to the full. In the wake of the EGC at Pittsburgh, we in the General Council have shared together our assessments of the current state of the Congregation and the way in which we could make use of the Spiritan Year as an occasion for renewal. We have tried to dig into the everyday life of the Congregation to see what inspires it. Below are some of the impressions that we have gained from our visits:

In a world of quickening change, cultural diversity, complexity and specialisation, we feel at times that we are losing our footing.



But it is a situation that gives us the chance to exercise freedom because it calls for personal choices. We must get rid of all self-delusion: it is only when we really know ourselves, with all our strengths and weaknesses, that we can integrate our Spiritan vision into the reality of our lives. So much of our life has been cerebral: the old style of formation tended to put the accent on grand ideas, to the neglect of the reality of the way we are, with all our needs and wounds. Some confreres have left the Congregation; we have been affected, to an extent, by the question of paedophilia. This brings home to us the reality of our vulnerability.

We have to learn to make our personal choices with integrity while at the same time being supported by a community and the Congregation. We cannot become free all alone; we need the help of others. But there is often a lack of personal communication between us and we sometimes know little about the confreres with whom we live. If we are to have a common spirituality which touches our lives and our work, we need to interact at a deeper level.

We could ask questions about the role of faith in our lives; does it have incisive repercussions, for example, in the way that some confreres deal with difficult situations? How far does prayer help them to react in the right way? Each of us has to fall back on our well-tried sources: personal and community prayer, Bible reading and celebration of the Eucharist in the light of what we are living, the example of other witnesses. We must let the Lord speak directly to our hearts. A practical spirituality is vital, especially for those who are deeply disappointed and depressed by situations of war and opposition. We should look for ways of reviving our confidence, like displaying texts from our founders in our communities. Others have been inspired by elements of the missionary vision of Libermann. In seeking the truth, we must pay much attention to our life of faith.

Where is our Faith?

Our Congregation made its aggiornamento after Vatican II by successive Chapters and the writing of our new Rule of Life. But the challenge of the contemporary world is an on-going thing. As we try to help those who are forgotten, the world today gives the impression of a boat that is out of control, driven by the anonymous force of the law of the global market – the law of the strongest. The media tell us of some societies that are suffering from stress and the excesses of consummation and others that are wracked by misery, chaos and fear. Recent events have spread the suffering to the whole world. We feel so helpless when we try to act against or draw attention to the forces of the globalised world. It can happen that we begin to have doubts.

The difficulty can also come from ourselves. Perhaps our aggiornamento has remained superficial and we have ended up by simply re-discovering our old weaknesses instead of producing something new. We can feel there is something essential lacking in our attempts to live a genuine Spiritan life. In the milieu in which most of us live, we act as if everything depends on us, as if we are perfectly capable of finding the right course of action by ourselves. The Christian tradition is often seen as an inherited package of convictions and values where each can draw out what is needed and make his own menu. We are all, to a greater or lesser extent, marked by such an attitude.

But at the heart of the original tradition, Jesus is there, after the paschal events, as a real and living presence in the faith of the disciples, in their relations with each other, in the witness that they give of him before men and women. He is the one who propels them towards an adventure beyond those horizons they have known so far. The power of his Spirit is real and creative in their lives. We, in our turn, must live with confidence in God's unconditional love in our own present experience. Beyond our own strength and competence, there is something that we could



never have given to ourselves: the living presence of Jesus amongst us. Are we able to call on him with all our heart like the apostles?

This thought leads us to identify a source that is the origin of everything. Faced with the huge variety of cultures and religions, we have to discern, more than we did in the past, what is the real origin of things and how it relates to us. We must not allow the face of Jesus to remain indistinct and blurred. Trust in him is lived at the level of the heart, at where we make our decisions and in the actions and attitudes that come from them. The presence of the Lord does not just come to us through what happened in the past: he reveals that he is still with us in the lives of those who testify to him. He continues to inspire us by the charism of our founders, but he also shows himself through the witness of the confreres with whom we live and work.

The Testimony of our Founders

We discover the strength of the Spirit of Christ in the lived experience of those who have made our history up to the present day. Libermann and Poullart are examples of total trust in God and openness to the Holy Spirit. Poullart let himself be led by unexpected events as he moved forward humbly in the presence of God. He wrote in *Reflections on the Truth of Religion*,

"Let others say what they please about me; let them approve of me or make fun of me, treat me as a visionary, a hypocrite or a righteous man! All this henceforth must leave me indifferent. He has given me life only that I may use it to serve him faithfully...God alone loves me sincerely and wants what is good for me. If I can please him, I shall be exceedingly happy. If I displease him, I am the most wretched man in the world. I have won everything if I live in grace. Losing it, I lose everything".

For Libermann, God is present throughout our history; even if things seem to roll on without him, he is always there with his merciful goodness. He wrote to the community at Cap des Palmes (15.01.1844):

"Don't be frightened by the difficulties you meet; never let them discourage you. You have not come in your own name; you are not the ones who are doing the work: it is he who sent you. You are not alone; he is always with you if you remain faithful. So don't be fainthearted or weak in your faith. An apostle of Jesus Christ can never be put off by obstacles. Put up with them with patience and in peace, but always persevere with your plans when they are truly for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Wait a bit when you meet difficulties that you can't overcome for the moment; just wait confidently for God's moment to arrive. It will come if you don't lose faith" (N.D. 6: p.3-8).

The power of the Spirit of Christ amongst us today

Although the Congregation is faced with numerous difficulties, as well as its own limitations and weaknesses, many confreres are giving an example of calm strength, perseverance, new initiatives despite obstacles and disappointments, a simple presence amongst the people, of fraternal life amongst different cultures, of a sense of responsibility and a deep concern for spiritual renewal. Their witness is strong and it renews our own faith when we meet them in the course of our visits. These tangible fruits of the Spirit are convincing evidence of the enduring presence of the Master throughout the storm.

We also see the presence of the Holy Spirit beyond the frontiers of the Church before the Gospel is ever preached. Just as Jesus is recognised in the Scriptures and the breaking of Bread, so the Spirit speaks to us through other peoples. He appears to us in the guise of the poorest of people and touches us deeply by their humility and trust.

The Spiritan Year is an opportunity to experience the unswerving love of God in our



lives and to build a greater confidence in him. It is the time to learn once more how to celebrate each day the newness of life that Christ gives us through his Holy Spirit. Our joy is not just that of the feasts that come and go: it springs from a new-found interior freedom, from friendship and forgiveness given and received.

During this year, the decisive question of

Jesus will be put to us again: "Do you also want to leave?". Will we give the same reply as Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Your words are words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are God's Holy One" (Jn. 6: 67-69). Are we genuine disciples who are going to be his witnesses? How can we communicate this faith to all those who are joining our Congregation? How can we deepen our own sufficiently to face up to the challenges of our day?

Some practical suggestions for all Spiritans

- We invite every Spiritan to set aside "a desert time" during the first weeks of the Spiritan Year at least one day to look at his or her life in the presence of God, to give thanks, to ask pardon, to renew confidence, to ask for needs and look to the future.
- After that, confreres could come together in community (if it is small) or in small groups for the larger communities in order to exchange your reflections of faith with each other. The sharing could then be extended to the whole circumscription on the occasion of other meetings or celebrations.
- Such a sharing could begin by considering our founders: how have they influenced my life, in one way or another?

- These two stages seem to be a good way to proceed towards the indispensable renewal of the whole of the Congregation; the Spiritan Year lasts for 16 months so it is good to spread the programme over several steps.
- We should not allow the process to lose itself in minor considerations; it should focus on our basic experience and the big challenges that we are meeting at this time.

- In our meditation, let us not forget the essentials of our vocation: How can we live in solidarity with the poor, in our personal context as well as on the larger scale? How can we bring about our spiritual renewal? How can promote greater friendship and fraternal sharing in the life of our Congregation which is ever more international and inter-cultural?

We must thank God for our Congregation and for all that it has accomplished, for all our con-

freres and what they are and have been to us. We share all the joys and hopes, the worries and anxieties of the men and women of our time. Our vocation is not to withdraw from this world but to love it and to live out God's loving plan in it under the breath of his Spirit. But to do this, we must also obey his call to draw aside at times to be alone with our Master.

May the Lord be with each of you and give you the power of his Spirit.

On behalf of the General Council,

Pierre Schouver

Helioun

The Prayer for the Spiritan Year

Holy Spirit, you are calling us to seize this favourable time to renew ourselves in our Spiritan life as we celebrate the memory of 300 years since our foundation and the charism passed on to us by our predecessors:

May your gifts of strength and wisdom help us to deepen our service to the poor;

May your gifts of humility and devotion help us to live our religious life to the full;

May your gifts of intelligence and discernment help us to recognise what you are calling us to do at this time; And by the fire of your love, enkindle in us that missionary enthusiasm which filled your Apostles from the day of Pentecost. AMEN



